

VIDEO, THE FÜHRER ON THE BLITZ. HITLER ALWAYS WANTED PEACE WITH BRITAIN.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rvsSDNcJO4o>

DEUTSCHE ÜBERSETZUNG UNTEN:

On 3 September 1939 the French and British empires had declared war on Germany and UK's Royal Air Force began attacking German warships along the German coast with the North Sea.

The attacks by the Royal Air Force (RAF) on German cities began with the attack on Wilhelmshaven on 5 September 1939. Eight months later, on 9 May 1940 began the German offensive in the West. On 11 May the British Cabinet decided to unleash the Bomber Command on the air war against the German hinterland. The following night British planes aimlessly dropped bombs for the first time on residential areas of Mönchengladbach-Rheydt. And from then on made such attacks on cities in the Ruhr area night after night. Up to 13 May 1940, i.e. two days later, the German side registered a total of 51 British air attacks on non-military targets plus 14 attacks on military targets such as bridges, railway tracks, defense and industrial plants.

The first carpet bombing of a German city was in the night from 15 to 16 May 1940 in Duisburg. After that the RAF committed repeated air attacks on German cities.

The night of 24th August 1940 - bombs meant to be dropped on the Thameshaven oil storage depot and on the Short's factory at Rochester, by mistake or simply because they were randomly unloaded in order to escape fighters, fell on the City of London and nine other districts inside the Greater London limit. Incendiaries lit fires in Bethnal Green, and St Giles' Church in Cripplegate was damaged. Oxford Street department stores were damaged. Nine people were killed and 58 injured.



Am 25. August 1940 griffen britische Bomber nachts Berlin an, und zwar nicht etwa, um gezielt kriegswichtige Ziele zu treffen - dazu war die Royal Air Force (RAF) nicht in der Lage, weil man geeignete Bombenzielgeräte nicht entwickelt hatte.

On 6/7 September 1940, a German air raid on London took place - but specifically on military targets such as ports, railway stations, war factories and power stations. Crews were expressly prohibited to drop their bombs on residential areas because thereby "no war deciding success could be reached."

Am 3. September 1939 hatten die französischen und britischen Imperien dem Deutschen Reich den Krieg erklärt und die britische Royal Air Force begann mit dem Angriff an deutsche Kriegsschiffe entlang der deutschen Küste in der Nordsee.

Die Angriffe der Royal Air Force (RAF) auf deutsche Städte begannen mit dem Angriff auf Wilhelmshaven am 5. September 1939.

Acht Monate später, am 9. Mai 1940, begann die deutsche Offensive im Westen. Am 11. Mai beschloß das britische Kabinett, dem Bomber Command den Luftkrieg gegen das deutsche Hinterland freizugeben. In der folgenden Nacht warfen britische Flugzeuge zum ersten Mal ungezielt Bomben auf Wohngebiete von Mönchengladbach-Rheydt. Und von da an erfolgten solche Angriffe auf Städte im Ruhrgebiet Nacht für Nacht. Bis zum 13. Mai 1940, also innerhalb von nur zwei Tagen, registrierte die deutsche Seite insgesamt 51 britische Luftangriffe auf nichtmilitärische Ziele neben 14 Angriffen auf militärische Ziele wie Brücken, Bahnlinien, Rüstungsindustrie und Werkanlagen.

Das erste großflächige Bombardement auf eine deutsche Großstadt erfolgte in der Nacht vom 15. auf den 16. Mai 1940 auf Duisburg. In der Folgezeit flog die RAF wiederholt Angriffe auf deutsche Städte.

Die Nacht vom 24. August 1940: Bomben für den Thameshaven Öllager und für die Short-Fabrik in Rochester gedacht, aus Versehen oder weil die einfach wahllos abgeworfen wurden um Jägern zu entkommen, fielen auf die City of London und neun andere Bezirke innerhalb der Grenzen des Greater London. Brandbomben zündeten Brände in Bethnal Green an und die Gileskirche in Cripplegate wurde beschädigt. Kaufhäuser auf Oxfordstraße wurden beschädigt. Neun Menschen wurden getötet und 58 verletzt.

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Am 6./7. September 1940 ein deutscher Luftangriff auf London erfolgte- allerdings gezielt auf militärische Objekte wie Hafenanlagen, Bahnhöfe, Rüstungswerke und Elektrizitätswerke. Es war den Besatzungen ausdrücklich verboten, ihre Bomben auf Wohngebiete abzuwerfen, da damit "kein kriegsentscheidender Erfolg zu erwarten" sei.

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Defending Against the Allied Bombing Campaign: Air Raid Shelters and Gas Protection in Germany, 1939-1945

[Samuel Crowell](#)

Recently the argument has been advanced that each of the crematoria at Birkenau was equipped with a gastight bomb shelter. The argument was first made in the summer of 1996 by Arthur R. Butz, with respect to Crematoria II and III in his Vergasungskeller article. [\[See note\]](#) In the spring of 1997 the concept was extended to cover all of the crematoria in Birkenau in my article "Technique and Operation of German Anti-Gas Shelters in World War Two" [hereinafter, "Technique"]. [\[See note\]](#)

Although the identification of these spaces as gastight bomb shelters was corroborated in "Technique" by extensive reference to contemporary German civil defense literature, public acceptance of the thesis has been slow. Part of the reason, no doubt, is that the "Bomb Shelter Thesis" contradicts the work of Jean Claude Pressac and others, notably, Robert Jan van Pelt. [\[See note\]](#) In addition we must recognize that the thesis, in either the Butz or Crowell variant, seems at first glance both unusual and even extraordinary.

But the argument for bomb shelters in the Birkenau crematoria seems extraordinary only because the scope of the German civil defense program is so little known. Hence, when the crematoria are identified as having had gastight bomb shelters the first reaction of the skeptic will be, "Why would there be alterations for the crematoria to serve as air raid shelters? Why not other buildings?," without recognizing that similar shelters were quite common in Germany, and, we believe it possible to show, also in the concentration camp system and Auschwitz-Birkenau in particular. So it should be clear that the argument for gastight bomb shelters in the Birkenau crematoria is strengthened to the extent that analogous structures can be shown to have existed both in the concentration camp system as well as in German cities.

The present article is an attempt to carry the argument for comparison and corroboration forward, in this case by supplementing the contemporary civil defense literature cited in "Technique" with secondary studies of German civil defense in the Second World War, comprising both recent German studies as well as U.S. government studies prepared in the immediate postwar period. The result will be the broader realization, widely recognized in the secondary literature, that gastight bomb shelters were a common feature on the wartime German civilian and concentration camp landscape.

We will begin by reviewing the rules and recommendations for German civil defense, and will find that the precautions the Germans took for bomb and gas attacks were extensive. A review of the actual types of structures will show a wide array of constructions, including adaptations of natural geologic formations, existing structures for secondary bomb shelter use, covered trenches for concentration camp internees, and a particular emphasis on aboveground structures, all of which were designed to defend against both bombs and gas attacks. Provisions for gastight doors, including those that would lock from the outside, reinforced concrete roofs, including those with brick ventilation shafts, and gas-filtering ventilation systems will be shown to have been quite common, according to both the documentary evidence and the oral testimony of the men, women, and children who took part in the large civil defense network. In addition, we will note the particular emphasis placed on chemical decontamination facilities, which would usually be sited in only a few dual-purpose locations in a city, and which, along with the specially trained decontamination crews, would also be used to combat vermin and the spread of infectious diseases, including typhus.

In the course of such a review we cannot pass by the opportunity to describe some of the circumstances whereby the Germans used this civil defense apparatus to maximum advantage, overcoming terror, destruction, and massive casualties to survive and endure. For if the story of the civil defense precautions in the concentration camp system is little known, so too has the German people's battle for survival in the Allied bombing campaign been largely ignored.

Civil Defense in Germany

Regulations

It was generally accepted after the First World War that aerial bombardment would be a feature of any future war, and that civilian populations would be targets. "Strategic" bombing in this sense was a kind of indirect warfare, meant to rupture the enemy's economy or demoralize its population so that the enemy army would be forced to capitulate. [\[See note\]](#) Such indirect warfare is a classic feature of siege warfare as well as naval blockade. The last circumstance may explain why Great Britain became the leading practitioner of strategic area bombing in the Second World War. A famous expression of Britain's point of view was made by Stanley Baldwin in the House of Commons on November 10, 1932:

I think it is well for the man in the street to realize that there is no power on earth that can protect him from being bombed. Whatever people may tell him, the bomber will always get through. The only defense is in offense, which means that you have to kill more women and children more quickly than the enemy if you want to save yourselves. [H43f, S12] (See Key to Sources Used, p. 39.)

Recognizing such a position, Germany made attempts to protect itself passively from future air attack in the 1920s, even though active defense -- searchlights, flak guns, and so on -- were forbidden by the Treaty of Versailles. [S11] By 1931 the Ministry of the Interior was issuing guidelines for civil defense, and in 1932 the first issue of the Vorläufige Ortsanweisung für den Luftschutz der Zivilbevölkerung was issued, which by war's end would comprise twelve chapters with numerous comprehensive attachments. [S12]

After Hitler took power Germany began preparing mobilization plans, and these included provision for the defense of cities. The mobilization plans of the Luftwaffe included a special attachment breaking down the cities of Germany into Civil Defense Areas (Luftschutz- orten) of Class I, II, and III. [S14] The difference in classes was primarily a matter of local control, inspection, and preparedness. The controls would be in the hands of the Luftschutzleiter (civil defense leader), usually the mayor or sometimes the local Nazi gauleiter. The 104 cities in Class I (or LSO-I) included all cities with large populations, and other cities that were considered vital for war industries. Thus Hamburg, Berlin, Munich, and Dresden were naturally LSO-I: but so was Siegen, with a population of 60,000. Siegen's inclusion was based on its location near the Ruhr, its status as a garrison city, and its war-important industries.[S16]

It would be tedious to go over the voluminous regulations governing the civil defense establishment in Germany from 1933 forwards, but there are two documents that deserve special attention: The Code of Practice for Building Shelters [Bestimmungen für den Bau von Luftschutz Bunkern] and the orders pertaining to the Luftschutz Führer Sofort Programm, that is, the Guidelines for the Emergency Air Raid Program, usually referred to as the LS-Führerprogramm.

The United States, in its postwar surveys, stressed the detailed nature of the Code and its provisions.[CD152f] In fact, the Code also laid down basic guidelines in which civil defense had to be viewed. The basic concepts turned on the collective nature of the enterprise: any program was to cover the whole city, and the program had to be worked into any urban development programs. The Code gave preference to aboveground shelters, because underground shelters were costlier. In addition, it specified various details, such as the number of gas locks for entry (preferably two), the width of entries, the size of the staircases, the need for washrooms, first aid rooms, and so on. [CD153]

If the Code underlay Germany's civil defense approach, the LS-Führerprogramm of November 1940 stressed the same points with greater detail and greater urgency. By the time of its issuance, Germany was reconciled to a long air war; therefore the details of the program were meant to be comprehensive and prescriptive, as a listing of some of its provisions shows:

1. For buildings (municipal buildings, dwellings, lots) which up to now have either inadequate air raid shelters, or none at all, do-it-yourself air raid measures will be adopted.
2. Existing or newly constructed streets or transportation paths (e.g., subways and tunnels) are to be adapted for the construction of underground and bombproof air raid shelters.
3. The openings to the outside in existing air raid shelters are to be removed and at the same time connections are to be made [to other shelters] with collapsible fire walls.
4. New public air raid shelters are to be constructed, and existing air raid shelters are to be made as bombproof as possible.
5. All new constructions, particularly in buildings for the armaments industry, are henceforth to be equipped with bombproof air raid shelters. Such shelters are to have the same priority as the structure being built itself. [S23f, N327ff]

A few clarifications to the program are necessary. "The openings to the outside" that needed to be closed has to do with the demonstrated insecurity of some emergency exits; this would lead eventually to the filling in of emergency exit passages with sand, or boxes of gravel, or even the filling in with a narrow wall. Second, the Brandmauerdurchbruch, or collapsible fire wall, was meant to connect a series of buildings, such as one would find in large cities. Such an expedient would of course be useless in situations where a building was isolated. The most striking thing about the LS-Führerprogramm, aside from the extensive construction that followed after it was issued, is the fact that it was global: all buildings, new or old, were to be equipped with bomb shelters.

Civil Defense in Cities

The organization for civil defense in Germany was extremely widespread. The Reichsluftschutzbund (hereinafter, RLB) [\[See note\]](#) numbered 12 million members by 1939 [B13], and it is only reasonable to assume that its numbers swelled as the war continued. Each city had a complicated hierarchy of positions and departments whose functions were clearly marked out.

The basic structure was the Sicherheits- und Hilfsdienst (SHD) (Security and Auxiliary Service), which was further subdivided. The Sicherheitsdienst (S-Dienst) functioned as security and police in the event of air raids, the Feuerlöschdienst (F-Dienst) were the firefighting crews, the Instandsetzungsdienst (I-Dienst) were charged with technical and emergency repairs, including bomb disposal and the rescue of bombing victims, and the Sanitätsdienst (San-Dienst) worked

closely with the Red Cross and the municipal health authorities in handling all problems of health, emergency care, and hygiene that grew out of the bombing raids. There was even a special department devoted to veterinary care, with emergency stations for the care of draft animals and pets. [N46-143]

The final division of the civil defense forces was the Entgiftungsdienst, or Decontamination Service. The decontamination workers were normally attached to the firefighters, and indeed in Nuremberg they were amalgamated with the firefighters in 1940, so that the gas protection function of the E-Dienst became auxiliary. [N77] By 1939, Nuremberg, with a population of about 450,000, had 15 decontamination squads with 15 NCOs and 300 men; in addition, there were 56 gas testers (Gasspürer) attached to the central authority. [N48] The role of the gas testers was to follow up on any suspicions of gas usage and take samples to one of 25 gas testing labs. Other fixed sites related to the work of the Decontamination Service included five decontamination centers with 5 NCOs and 20 men, and five centers for the decontamination of materials (Sachentgiftungsanstalten), also divided among 25 personnel. The location of these stations is difficult to establish today but it is clear that they made use of existing locations that featured laundries and public bathing facilities. [N78, CD164] It seems probable also that the municipal disinfection centers (several German cities possessed these) were earmarked for dual purposes. [\[See note\]](#) The example of the city of Nuremberg can safely be extrapolated to Germany at large, not least because of the global nature of the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey's report, which covers German gas protection measures in detail.[CD164f]

The members of the Decontamination Service throughout Germany were issued special protective clothing, including rubberized suits and boots, and, like other important personnel in the Civil Defense Program, had higher quality gas masks (some 12 million gas masks in all were distributed). [CD153,CD164] The U.S. Strategic Survey Final Report considered it significant that the production of this anti-gas warfare gear continued until the end of the war.[CD164]

In addition, the members of the decontamination squads received special training: of the 150 hours of instruction for these auxiliary firefighters, no less than 25-1/2 hours were devoted to chemical warfare.[N78] On the other hand, in order to reduce anxiety, the average citizen received only about a half hour of chemical warfare instruction. [CD165] In addition to the decontamination squads, gas testers, the various fixed sites and their work crews, gas protection also included trucks and even ships equipped with cleansing apparatus, and chemicals and decontamination equipment, including trucks and supplies held in reserve to be sent to afflicted areas.[CD164f]

As to the application of gas protection features to air raid shelters, it was a given that bombproof also meant gasproof, as one author remarks: "Particular attention had to be given to the entrances to the bunkers. Each bunker had to have at least two entrances and each entrance had to be equipped with a gas-lock. It was understood that bombproof meant proof against gas bombs!" [S40] The U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey corroborates: "All buildings and public shelters constructed or modified to house air-raid protection activities were gas proof." [CD164] Further evidence of the pervasive nature of gas protection in Germany can be found in "Technique."

Shelters and Equipment

Secondary sources pertaining to the civil defense procedures of individual cities are a good source of information on the types of shelters erected. But an extremely useful summary of such structures can also be found in an essentially contemporary publication of the U.S. government, the Civil Defense Division Final Report, issued in its second edition in January 1947.

The most basic shelter was the home shelter, or do-it-yourself shelter (Behelfmässige Luftschutzraum), such as one would find in private homes or apartment buildings. Since some 22 million Germans lived in 58 cities of 100,000 or more [H128], and there were 104 cities with priority civil defense classification (i.e., Luft-schutzort I) [S15], we can imagine that there must have been literally hundreds of thousands of cellars that were fitted out with at least minimal bomb and gas protection. Here, the numerous "how-to" articles in periodicals such as Gasschutz und Luftschutz indicate the extent of the preparation. According to the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey, such shelters were subject to inspection and approval by the local authorities [CD155] and had to meet the following specifications:

1. at least rudimentary gas-proofing,
2. at least one emergency exit (usually to an adjoining cellar through a Brandmauerdurchbruch, or collapsible fire wall),
3. the sealing of all other openings to the outside, and
4. in some cases rudimentary struts of wooden beams or brick. [CD155]

The costs of such private shelters were frequently subsidized by the government [CD155]: a wise move, as during the heavy raids the line between private and public shelters was frequently erased. As can be imagined such basic basement shelters provided only marginal support in the heaviest raids, but the insistence on gas proofing is certainly significant in evaluating the importance and pervasiveness of anti-gas measures.

A secondary category involved semi-public shelters, which included schools and other municipal buildings. These were probably the most numerous of the various dual purpose shelters that served a public function; the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey specifies that they were equipped with gastight

steel doors.[CD156] The problem with such converted shelters is that in some parts of the country, notably in the east and south, the building of communal shelters was delayed until late in the war, precisely at the point when building materials were most difficult to obtain. For example, Bavaria was long called the "Air Raid Shelter of Germany" on the understanding that it would not be bombed because of its distance from Britain. This assumption also led to the "Kinder Land Verschickung," a program in which children were evacuated from the north and west to the south. [U.S.214] But from 1943 onwards all parts of the country would be bombed, and this probably explains the variability in the children's death toll, ranging from 10 percent in places like Hamburg and Nuremberg to 30 percent in cities like Darmstadt (see discussion below) because the children in the latter locations would not have been evacuated. Acceptable bomb and gas protection seem to have been widely available in converted shelters, as we shall see, but given the nature of the firestorm raids from 1943 onwards these would be of little help; cities such as Munich, Augsburg, and Dresden were seriously affected by a lack of preparedness.

Of the dedicated public shelters, there were several types. Probably the most numerous of these were the trench shelters, such as one would find in the labor camps and concentration camps (these will be discussed in more detail later). Stollen, essentially semicircular tunnels bored into a hillside, were also found, although often downtown underground bunkers would mimic the structure of Stollen. Since the vertical protection would depend on the height of the hill being bored into, we can imagine that they were quite secure. The main problem with such shelters was that they could only be built where the lay of the land would support them. And there were occasional design lapses: one Stollen in Stuttgart, designed to hold 1,000, was notorious for lacking any restrooms. [S99]

Another common shelter, particularly in the cities, was the large Luftschutzbunker. Sometimes building these involved the expansion of existing basements, or the digging of sub-basements. The floor plans for some of these shelters are mind-boggling in size: one that was inspected could hold 10,000 people. [CD157] Although priority was given to aboveground shelters, the Germans ended up building many under ground because of the lack of space, particularly in the centers of cities. [CD157] These were usually long, flat structures with flat roofs of reinforced concrete. Forced ventilation was standard, with standard Schutzraumbelüfter, operated by electricity or by hand. Air intakes (Entlüftungs-rohre) would usually be equipped with a gastight flap, as drawings indicate. [S77] Sometimes the air intake would have a large and heavily sloped brick chimney, which, due to the slope, would occupy a mass many times greater than the aperture. [N569] It was apparently not unusual to use vent pipes for camouflage purposes. [CD162]

The large Hochbunker (or aboveground bunker) was a German innovation that had no counterpart among the Allies. They were usually large concrete blocks built aboveground and designed, like the Luft-schutzbunkern, for multiple use: for people, important documents, artworks. Eventual peacetime use was envisioned for the Hochbunker: indeed, in Hamburg many of these would be converted to office blocks after the war. [G69] They could be classed in various categories, including those that were provided with false roofs and painted-on windows that looked like gigantic chateaux, others that resembled squat skyscrapers with bricked-in windows, still others that were round and faced with brick, like the keep of a castle, and still others that looked like tapered towers. [S26ff, CD157f]

Although aboveground shelters would seem particularly vulnerable because they were exposed, in practice they seem to have worked quite well. Since they were of concrete, they did not catch fire, and since they were detached from other buildings they were not as directly affected by other burning buildings; hence the effects of heat or gases would not be as great. In the Hamburg raids of late July 1943, the second to last of which created the famous firestorm, only 100 people in aboveground shelters perished, largely as a result of two direct hits on smaller structures. Considering that more than 50,000 people were killed that night and that over eleven hundred tons of high explosives were expended, that seems a remarkably low total.

Perhaps one of the most unusual public air raid shelters was the Parkhöhle in Weimar. The Parkhöhle is a long jagged series of caves that lie beneath the city, several hundred meters in length, caused by water cutting through the rock formations. Long a tourist attraction, the Parkhöhle was converted to bomb shelter use late in the war, with some brick strutting done, as well as the provision of some other equipment. Because of its size, it was not felt necessary to ventilate its long corridors. The caves were also the site of extensive archaeological work by Johann Wolfgang Goethe and his son: the ethnographic museums of Weimar today still display their finds of ancient bones and other materials from the Old Stone Age. [P19ff,49]

As already noted in the discussion in "Technique," ventilation in the air raid shelters was a problem insofar as it had to provide sufficient air per person (11 cubic feet per minute), had to provide temperatures in the acceptable range (24C to 17C), and provide for humidity control. [CD158] In addition, the more secure shelters would be flooded with refugees in the event of severe raids. Overcrowding was always a problem.

It is difficult to reconstruct the number of shelters or the types of shelters built before and during the war, but various indications from the secondary literature provide a number of clues. It is known, for example, that Hamburg had over 2,000 public shelters for about 500,000 persons, out of a population of over 1 million. [G69] Wuppertal, with a population of 400,000, built or converted over 100 shelters. [S98] Since Hamburg was one of the better-prepared cities in the Reich, it is a safe inference that the rest of the residents were distributed in smaller home shelters and LS-Kellern, the colloquial name for the cellars of apartment buildings adapted for bomb shelter use. [N442]

Dresden, on the other hand, had no dedicated public shelters, and only a few converted public shelters, yet home and apartment protection appears to have been up to standard. [D166f]

A detailed study of the city of Siegen provides information that can be extrapolated to the rest of the Reich. Under the LS-Führerprogramm, over 10 million RM was spent in the construction of 17 large public shelters, another 6 million for 8 Stollen, and close to another million in the conversion of 100 or so existing buildings to semi-public shelters. For a total outlay of over 17 million Reichsmarks, Siegen was able to provide adequate public shelter for about 20 percent of its population of 60,000, the rest falling back on home and cellar shelters. [S86]

There is also the case of Nuremberg. Early in the course of the LS-Führerprogramm, four shelters were designed for a cost of 3.6 million RM, even though the city began the war with dozens of public shelters. [N385] In 1943, the budget called for 52 new public shelters, the improvement of 294 old shelters, and the strutting and splinterproofing of 3,600 home shelters for a cost of one and a half million RM.[N450] But neither in Nuremberg, nor in any other city, was funding, principally by the government, ever lacking -- "Geld war genug da" -- the money was there. [N385] Further data on Nuremberg indicates that in 1942 there were 13,500 Kellerräume, that is, shelters for home and apartment dwellers. [N446]

Considering that there were over 12 million in the Luftschutzbund in 1939, that over 22 million Germans lived in 58 cities highly vulnerable to air attack (over 75 cities were essentially leveled by the RAF alone) [H374f], we can easily arrive at the conclusion that the program built thousands of dedicated public shelters, tens of thousands of semi-public conversions, and hundreds of thousands of home and cellar shelters at a total cost of billions of marks.

German Civil Defense in Practice

The test of the German civil defense system came when the bombs started to fall. In spite of the careful planning, many precautions would not function in firestorm conditions. Then survival became a matter of luck, desperate courage, or strong leadership among the RLB Feldwebeln (sergeant majors) and fire wardens.

Under normal conditions the system seemed to operate well enough, with the usual precautions functioning normally. Thus one man would recall his boyhood experiences:

I was a Hitler Youth messenger. As such, I was stationed at an air raid shelter bunker built both aboveground and underground. When an air raid alarm sounded, we had to be there on time and open the bunker with the "block leader," a party official who was responsible for the street. We had to care for the children, give them milk, and so on, if the alarm lasted a long time. [...] The block leader or the women from the Nazis' women's organization sent around and handed out toys to the children and light sedatives to the adults. And the louder the attack got outside, the quieter it got in the bunker.

The underground shelters were more like "tube bunkers." When you came through the steel door, fitted with rubber around the edges to make it airtight, you entered a diagonal hallway. This hallway was joined by three or four tube-like hallways perpendicular to it. Each of these, in turn, was a separate bunker. Air was pumped through each tube by machines which we Hitler Youth operated. That was one of our jobs. My duties also involved running messages from one bunker to another if the telephones went dead. We were outfitted with gas masks, steel helmets, etc. We had to go out at all times, even when the bombs were falling. I was 13 years old at the time. [V211]

The above not only indicates the ordinariness of underground shelters, gastight steel doors, and hand-cranked ventilators, but also the integral role that women and children played in civil defense. One woman, in Dresden, describes surviving the American daylight raid after the famous firestorm:

Normally, there were only 20 to 25 of us down in the cellar. But now, with many people off the street, including those who'd stopped over at our house, there were about 100 of us. Nevertheless, no one panicked -- we were too numb and demoralized from the night before. We just sat there. The attack rolled closer, and then a bomb hit. It was like a bowling ball that bounced, or jumped perhaps, and at that moment the lights went out. The whole basement filled with dust. When the bomb carpet reached us, I crouched in a squatting position, my head between my legs. The air pressure was immense, but only for a moment. The rubber seals on the windows and the steel doors probably helped to absorb some of the impact. Someone screamed, and then it was quiet. Then a voice shouted, "It's all right, nothing's happened." It was the shelter warden. [V231]

The above quote is informative in a couple of ways. It describes the typical gastight seals on steel doors and windows. Such fixtures appear to have been common, even in Dresden, where, instead of specially built bomb shelters, existing facilities were used for virtually all large public shelters. [S99f,D166f] In addition, the role of the shelter warden in maintaining calm in the shelters is suggested. Indeed, it appears in several cases that the survival of thousands if not tens of thousands depended on the leadership and resource of the Feldwebeln (sergeant majors), Branddirektoren (fire wardens), and the roving rescue squads of the SHD. The experiences of Sergeant Major Schäfer and Fire Warden Bey of the Hamburg RLB, as related to Gordon Musgrove for his Operation Gomorrah, are both typical and extraordinary. [G71f,73f,91f]

Schäfer was bombed out of his own apartment the day before the firestorm and had moved down

the street to take up residence. When the firestorm raid began, he withdrew to the shelter of his new building, along with about 400 others. Over the course of the next half hour or so, he was led to make several trips out of the shelter into the flames, in order to determine the extent of the damage, from which he determined very early on the need for immediate evacuation. And here we encounter a common theme in shelter rescues: the need for forceful and even brutal leadership to save lives.

In Schäfer's case, his shouted demand for evacuation was greeted with fear and apathy, a reaction often cited in the air war literature. Schäfer's response was immediate: he grabbed the first two people near the exit by the scruff of their necks, dragged them up and out into the flaming street, and took them down to the corner to point out the way to safety in a nearby park. He repeated this exercise several more times, leading out by force a number of women and their children, which in turn brought everyone else out. When everyone had exited the shelter, he followed behind. On the way, he broke into a building that was not yet in flames, rescuing another party there, then made several dashes into the street to save women whose clothing had caught fire, passed out and was revived by some his people, retreated to the park with them, found temporary relief from a water tower, and finally, after several hours, was rescued with his full complement several blocks further away. There seems little doubt that without Schäfer's energetic leadership his party would not have survived, for the building from which they escaped collapsed minutes after his departure. What makes his self-control and presence of mind even more remarkable is that the last person to leave his shelter was his wife, and as she did so she handed him their three-month-old child.

At this point it is necessary to pause and understand why there would be so much reluctance to leave the shelters. Most of the city raids were fire-raisers and several culminated in firestorms. Outside one had to contend with exploding bombs (including delayed action bombs), bomb splinters, falling masonry or entire buildings, and wooden roofing and construction beams that would fly around in the storm winds like matchsticks. In addition, all commentators make reference to a kind of continual shower of sparks, using metaphors like "swarms of fiery bumblebees," or "blizzards of red snow": these sparks could not only burn and blind but could also set one's clothes on fire. Finally, there was the heat, the gusting winds that would whipsaw back and forth and create clouds of sparks and debris at intersections, and which would reduce many trying to escape to crawling on all fours. Under these circumstances the difficulty in breathing was terrible: oftentimes one finds the comment "the air just wouldn't come" and similar sentiments. [U.S.22] One warden, standing outside his shelter, was seized with a terrifying premonition of his own death, and not long after, suddenly passed out. Mercifully, he was right outside of a Hochbunker, and was dragged back in to safety. [G98] Another survivor describes falling to the ground and being forced to breathe off the pavement during the firestorm, burning his lips and mouth in the process. After an hour and a half the crisis had passed. Dead people were lying all around him. [G111f] In the Dresden raid, a survivor described a group of young girls who finally took the risk to dash across a courtyard and open a gate that would allow them to escape from the fires. Yet, as they were struggling with the gate, a building nearby collapsed, killing all of them. [D170] Seeing or hearing of such situations no doubt led many, and particularly women, women with children, and the elderly, to forsake the frightening uncertainty outside for what they believed would be the comparative security of the bunker. These people rarely survived.

The leadership and professionalism of the air raid crews were of particular importance during firestorms, for here the elaborate systems of precaution frequently broke down. Collective protector ventilation systems might start billowing smoke; emergency exits and shutters might crash in from the impact of bombs and offer no more protection; fire walls might be broken down in an effort to escape, only to allow in lethal fire and smoke. Here again the human element made the difference between life and death.

Fire Warden Bey was another air raid leader in Hamburg. When the firestorm raid on Hamburg began, he was walking around the block, gathering up stragglers, but he too was soon forced to retreat to his shelter. Within a matter of minutes the street was ablaze and the shelter was becoming overcrowded with people from outside or from other shelters that had failed. Some of them wore clothes which had already begun to smolder, others had ripped their clothes off to avoid the flames. The ventilation system soon broke down and the lighting soon failed; and, while he had no real hopes of fixing it, Bey made a shrewd display of instructing a few men to work on it, hoping that that would placate his anxious crowd and give them hope. Meanwhile, Bey and one of his NCOs went out on a number of patrols looking for help or safety. No clear escape route was found, nor did they find any of the emergency squads, which were roaming the blazing city in trucks, but they did find some water, which they carried back to the bunker, by now extremely overcrowded. A series of cracks made in the connecting walls with other cellars did not lead to safety either, but brought even more dazed survivors into the shelter.

Going out into the street one more time, Bey finally flagged down a major of the SHD with a rescue party and organized an evacuation. Returning to his shelter, Bey found that his people had given up all hope, but finally he was able to coax a few to follow him out so that he could explain the plan. No sooner had he stepped onto the street to encourage the others to join him, when two adjoining buildings collapsed, knocking him down and covering him with dust and debris. Meanwhile, his observers panicked and dashed back to safety. Bey got to his feet and returned to the shelter, and finally succeeded in goading and hectoring his people into the street. One by one the people from the shelter stepped out, encouraged by an exhausted Bey, forming a human chain down two streets and into a park. After inspecting the shelter one last time, he followed behind where he found all of his people in safety. Clearly the tenacity and perseverance of Fire Warden Bey was instrumental in their survival, but so too were the roving squads of the SHD, who abandoned their role of fire

monitoring and fire fighting early on in order to save as many lives as possible. In this particular case, the lives of more than 700 were spared.

A particularly harrowing example of rescue concerns the city of Braunschweig, which was bombed on October 15, 1944. Here the breakdown concerned what in retrospect would seem both foolish and tragic: the tendency of some shelter doors to be locked and bolted from the outside to prevent panicked civilians from rushing outside prematurely. The raid began at 2:30 in the morning and developed a minor firestorm in the city center within 45 minutes. But this same area contained eight large bunkers and public shelters which housed 23,000 people. It was impossible to get through because of the firestorm, and thus the rescue of these people depended solely on the ingenuity of the firefighters.

By 5 am they were ready. Hoses were leapfrogged forward group by group, throwing up a "water alley" of protection for the next group that would detach its hoses, move forward, reattach, and create the next segment of the alley. Overcoming numerous complexities and failures, the firefighters finally got through to the bunkers at 7 o'clock the next morning, and "As the doors were unbarred and unlocked the rescuers heard the sound of 'many people talking quietly but nervously under their breath.'" [D64f] Then the survivors were led back to safety in an enormous human chain under the canopy of water.

There is a tendency when discussing war to expect the greatest demonstrations of leadership on the battlefield, and to view civilian victims as mere passive statistics, whose numbers are then manipulated for political purposes. Yet the narratives that have been recounted here remind us otherwise. The leadership, courage, and devotion to duty demonstrated by Sergeant Major Schäfer, Fire Warden Bey, and the Braunschweig firefighters -- along with many others -- were in the finest traditions of any military organization. They were charged with saving as many lives as possible. At great personal risk, they accomplished that mission.

The Number of Victims

Yet it must be said that hundreds of thousands died. A usual figure for dead German civilians in the air war is about 593,000 -- most round up to 600,000, others tend to argue for a lower figure, 300,000 to 400,000. [H11,DD171n] Rudolf Höss, the commandant of Auschwitz, insisted in his memoirs that "the total number of victims of the air war will probably never be found. In my estimation there were probably several million. The casualty figures were never made public. They were top secret." [DD171] But the value of Höss' estimation is only a problem for those who consider him reliable in other areas.

The 593,000-600,000 figure, in turn, accepts a low estimate for Dresden, about 35,000. But it is doubtful that the figures for Dresden were so low. Hamburg, with a population of 1.2 million, suffered about 50,000 in the firestorm of July 29, 1943. But this was during the third of several attacks, and we should expect that many had fled from the city by the time of the third attack (the overall reduction in Hamburg's population was 43 percent). [G162] We know that the population of several cities was reduced as a result of air raids: Nuremberg's population of about a half million had been halved by late in the war. [N445] In addition, Hamburg suffered its terrific casualties even though it was well equipped with thousands of shelters.

On the other hand, Dresden, with a pre-war population of 600,000, had been swelled with hundreds of thousands of refugees from the east, fleeing the Soviet army: its population at the time of the raid was probably comparable to Hamburg's at that city's zenith. Dresden was also struck by a firestorm: but it lacked almost all of the safeguards present in Hamburg. There were no large Hochbunkern in Dresden where people could wait out the storm. Death from asphyxiation would seem to be guaranteed.

Additionally, the hundreds of thousands of refugees in the city would have no way of orienting themselves or knowing how to escape: we can assume panic among many of them, and desperate retreat into overcrowded underground converted public shelters that would ultimately become death traps. Moreover, since Dresden had never before been seriously bombed, the population had neither fled, nor been reduced in number, nor were they likely well versed in procedures that would save their lives: and only one, evacuation, would save them in the firestorm. On top of this, the second wave of British bombers was designed to bomb the center of the city at precisely the time when the maximum amount of aid would be in the streets trying to save the lives of the victims from the first wave: that percentage of losses must also be considered. Finally, the third blow by the Americans, next day, doubtless brought its casualties, along with the P-51 Mustangs which, according to some accounts, strafed survivors. [D182,SF180]

Finally, there is the matter of accurate counting due to the problems of cleaning up the destruction. It is well known that tens of thousands were burned on pyres in the center city, but bodies were still being recovered when the Soviets took over the city on May 8, 1945. And, as in the case of other cities, the recovery of dead bodies was not the highest priority: bodies were recovered when possible, and there were several cases after the war when the bulldozing of previously impassable rubble turned up human remains. [G167] Hans Voigt of Bielefeld, whose diary was employed by David Irving in his famous study of the Dresden raid, described his job in the gathering, identification, and disposal of remains: his final estimate was 135,000. [D208ff] While Hamburg is usually conceded to have caused 50,000 deaths, it is well to keep in mind that at the time the death toll was given out as between 30,000-40,000 [G167]: therefore, for people to assume similar

casualties at Dresden would have seemed normal at the time. However, the conditions were definitely much worse in Dresden, for the reasons given, and therefore it seems likely that the casualty figures were much higher than those of Hamburg. In that case, Hans Voigt's projection seems reasonable, which would mean that the overall loss of life in the air war was in the neighborhood of 700,000.

Of the 15,802 bodies that were identifiable after the Hamburg firestorm, 6,072 were men, 7,995 were women, and 1,735 were children (children usually meaning pre-teenage). The percentages are thus 38.4 percent men, 50.6 percent women, and 11 percent children. [G167] For Darmstadt, which also experienced a firestorm but which was not as well prepared as Hamburg, there were 936 military deaths, 368 POW deaths, and 492 foreign laborer (i.e., forced laborer) deaths. Of 6,637 identifiable civilian dead (twice that many died) 1,766 were men, 2,742 were women, and 2,129 children. The percentages are thus 26.6 percent men, 41.3 percent women, 32 percent children. [H325f] Other raids show similar breakdowns, from which we conclude that the Allied campaign directed at German civilian morale killed mostly women and children.

There is a melancholy footnote to the Dresden raid, which, whatever its final counting, was surely the worst air raid in the European theater. As is well known, Churchill proceeded with the raid because he wished to make a demonstration of British might on the continent to the Soviets. [D148,D214] In the event, however, the raid, which was promised to hold up communications and transport for the front, and thus abet the Soviet offensive, was a failure: within three days, the marshalling yards were back to limited operation, and the city was not taken until after the war was over. [D177f] It is interesting to note that Churchill, in his memoirs, describes his determined effort to ensure that Eisenhower not capture the city. [D232] One can suggest a number of reasons for this; certainly the Americans crossed the Elbe at several other points. Popular perceptions of Dresden continue to be informed by Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse Five*, a tremendously popular and widely read novel that describes the raid as "the greatest massacre in European history." [SF101] In opposition, we have the occasional little-read book which assures us that the bombing of Dresden was not a crime. As Vonnegut might say, so it goes.

After the Raids

The morning after the raids was the time for cleanup and rescue, although even before the raids were over the people would be out in the street; women putting out fires, boys working water pumps for the firefighters, members of various crews and civilians organizing ad hoc rescue operations. The first priority was locating and rescuing survivors, as well as treating the injured, who, as in a real battle, would far outnumber the dead. Doctors had been privately informed that the threat of carbon monoxide poisoning was high, even in open areas: therefore they were told to give priority to unconscious victims ahead of those who had been buried, burned, or suffered broken bones. [U.S.24f] In Hamburg alone 37,439 were injured seriously enough to be counted, including many amputees and those with severe and lifelong burns. [G167]

Locating the living had its problems, because if they were in shelters their location might have been covered by tons of brick and masonry. To help orient the crews, underground cellars were supposed to have white paint markings several meters up the side of their buildings pointing down to the air raid shelter. [N495,N540] The I-Dienst was equipped with listening equipment, which consisted of a console from which highly sensitive microphones were led and then placed in piles of rubble. A photograph from the period shows two members of a rescue crew, one gesturing for silence, as they listen intently for the sound of breathing. [N538,N79-105] Everyone was involved in rescues, including forced laborers and prisoners of war, who would be trucked in or marched in from local camps. Naturally, the prisoners and laborers did not have much choice, but it appears that in the immediate aftermath of a raid the political hatreds that had inspired it were forgotten and the common denominator of humanity took over. Irving relates how British POWs threw themselves into rescue work after Dresden, improvising listening devices, running pipes down into the debris to provide air to those below, putting themselves at risk to save lives. [D183,D194] It was probably the same after all of the raids.

The center of the bombing zone was usually marked off, and the people were forbidden access. As Vonnegut described it, "Germans were stopped there. They were not permitted to explore the moon." [SF213] Then the work crews, supplemented by POWs and camp internees, would turn to the grisly task of recovering the dead. After the Kassel firestorm of 1943, the police president issued suggestions on the things that would be required by the rescue crews, including protective suits, rubber gloves, goggles, disinfectants, and also tobacco (probably to defeat the sense of smell), alcohol (to encourage the workers), and shears and bolt cutters to cut off the fingers of the dead wearing jewelry, which would later be used to identify the victims.[H320] Buckets of rings were recovered from the Dresden dead in this fashion. [D208] In Dresden, the devastation had been so great that there were no rubber gloves available; an American POW describes how they improvised:

The guard pointed at the corpse as one I should remove. He indicated I take a belt off another body and put it around the one I was to remove. It's surprising how much could be communicated by hand motions. I put a belt around the neck of this man and started to drag it towards the ramp, but [the body] broke in half. That was too much for me. I sort of lost it for a bit. I began to scream, yell and dance around. I tried to go out but they wouldn't let me. They got me quieted down, pointed to one of the bottles on the table and insisted I have a few swallows. That was the first I ever tasted liquor of any kind. [A408]

While it was understood that the decontamination squads would work as firefighters until needed for special purposes, it should be obvious that their protective clothing, equipment, and training made them perfectly suited for such activities as corpse handling, as well as in the disinfection of shelters, where for example "corpse water" (Leichenwasser) was found. [N77]

At that point the decontamination squads would be subordinated to the Sanitation Service (about one third of the Nuremberg decontamination personnel were so assigned)[N135], whose duties involved not only medical care but also water purification, corpse handling, garbage disposal, pest control, and disease control. [N77f,N123f,N298ff] In fact in Nuremberg, in the last years of the war, the municipal disinfection center was used not only for the combatting of rats and flies but also for the delousing of city residents. [N123f]

The reward for these levels of sanitation prophylaxis was that German cities were untouched by epidemics throughout the war, despite the intensive destruction. One doctor, writing for the U.S. Strategic Air Survey after the war, was "incredulous" at this fact, which he initially considered "inconceivable." [U.S.82] His explanation focused on three factors: first, the German people had high standards of personal cleanliness and orderliness even under the most extreme conditions; second, the RLB aggressively pursued a program of education on personal hygiene, for which citizens were required to attend six lectures each quarter throughout the war; and finally the cooperation (Dr. Enloe calls it "docility") [U.S.82] of the population in such measures as boiling water after an air raid or in laying out traps during designated rat extermination campaigns.

Nevertheless, there were some outbreaks of disease, including typhus fever, which did not appear until after "foreign laborers" had been imported from Eastern Europe, where the disease was endemic (it is assumed that these foreign laborers were largely Soviet POWs and Eastern Jews). [U.S.30] Although the foreign workers and POWs were inspected, and one assumes, deloused, twice on entering Germany [U.S.30f, cf. SF86], Dr. Bauer believed that the conditions of the labor camps, including overcrowding and lack of sanitation, contributed to the outbreaks; so, too, did the air raids, in which the civilian population came into contact with the internees in the shelters, or during evacuations. He also cited the extension of working hours and the lack of soap as contributing factors. Another likely influence was the fact that the firefighting crews frequently wound up using raw sewage in combating fires. [U.S.63]

That the gas decontamination squads would become involved in such activities (corpse handling, disinfection, vermin control, and delousing) creates a number of powerful associations that point to multi-purpose roles in situations where facilities or personnel are scarce. To put it another way, the decontamination paradigm of treatment, featuring undressing, washing, and dressing in clean garments, is also the model for the handling of infectious material, including the disposal of the dead, as well as for the municipal disinfection stations, and the delousing stations in concentration camps.

Most descriptions of the cleanup procedures contain not only wrenching but also seemingly fantastic descriptions, particularly when dealing with the recovery of the dead. Thus one reads of an "undulating layer of gray ash" that is supposed to represent firestorm victims [D45], or reductions of people to puddles, or multicolored corpses, and so on. But unlike other fantastic descriptions that have emerged from the war, such descriptions have a strong documentary, forensic, and even photographic basis. After the war the United States published studies that were based on the extensive reports prepared by German doctors for the secret use of the German government. These attest to, and explain, the reality of these fantastic descriptions.[U.S., 14, 16, bibliography p. 29]

The discoloration of corpses is one feature that even historians do not seem to clearly understand. Thus, David Irving, who describes corpses that are blue, orange, and green, seems to think that carbon monoxide poisoning was somehow responsible [D48], while Max Hastings, who even cites the color purple, seems to think that the discoloration was due to pyrotechnics. [H319,H315] In short, the descriptions are not understood, so the authors have simply projected explanations onto the situation. This is human nature: confronted with sights and sounds that we do not understand, we project onto the reality an explanation that accords either with what we have been taught, or what we expect, or simple guesswork.

Corpse discoloration also accounted for similar projections by the German people during the course of the war. A particular case concerns the city of Kassel after the raid of October 22, 1943. This raid, which raised a firestorm, killed fewer than 8,000 out of a population of 228,000, and it appears that the extensive precautions of the RLB were a major factor. [D46ff] But when many of the dead were found in their shelters days after the attack, the brilliant hues their bodies had assumed brought forth the charge of poison gas usage. To stabilize the situation, doctors conducted extensive postmortems; part of their report, dated November 1, 1943, reads as follows:

Five of the corpses selected by the chief Police-doctor in Kassel, Herr Senior Staff Police-doctor Fehmel, were dissected at the cemetery. The corpses concerned, of people killed during the terror-raid on Kassel on 22.10.43, had been recovered from basements after several days. Closer particulars are not known. Two corpses were of the male sex and about 18-20 years old; three were of women, of which one was between about 50 and 60 years old, the other two about 30 years old. There were no external injuries manifest on the corpses, which were in a condition of high-degree putrefaction. [...] The skin was partly colored a uniform red as a result of the hemolysis which had set in, but in extensive areas it was already colored green. This green coloring is attributed to the action of the ammonium sulphide with the reduced hemoglobin, which had, of

course, permeated the skin as a result of the hemolysis that had preceded it. This green coloration, the analysis of which had been specially stressed in the conferences in Kassel, is as such purely a post mortem manifestation of corpses, cannot be connected with any particular poisonous chemicals which might have been employed by the enemy during the terror-raid. [emphasis in original, D 235f]

The issue is confirmed also in mortuary literature, which clarifies the details of the Kassel report:

The first sign of putrefaction is a greenish skin discoloration appearing on the right lower abdomen about the second or third day after death. [...] Both color and smell are produced by sulphur containing intestinal gas and a breakdown of red blood cells.

Under normal conditions, the intestinal bacteria in a corpse produce large amounts of foul-smelling gas that flows into the blood vessels and tissues. It is this gas that bloats the body, turns the skin green to purple to black, makes the tongue and eyes protrude, and often pushes the intestines out through the vagina or rectum. The gas also causes large amounts of foul-smelling blood-stained fluid to exude from the nose, mouth, and other body orifices. [I42]

This last is no doubt a reference to the "Leichenwasser" (or corpse-water) described above, which occurs as the internal organs liquefy [I 43], as well as a confirmation of such descriptions as "The bottom steps were slippery. The cellar floor was covered by an eleven- or twelve-inch deep liquid mixture of blood, flesh and bone." [D194]

The Kassel report, supplemented by the mortuary literature, is important in several respects. In the first place it makes it clear that putrefaction could engender a wide variety of hues and it is possible that fire and heat even extended this palette. [H315] Thus the claim of multi-colored corpses is strikingly confirmed. Second, the mere issuance of the report indicates not only a widespread ignorance of the discoloration that attends dead bodies, but also the widespread, if not paranoid, assumption that discolored corpses must have been killed with poison gas. This will be, I believe, an important factor to consider when evaluating Allied reports from the last days of the war. But finally, the fears of the populace with regards to the danger of poison gas were in a sense justified: although the fact was not publicized at the time, many of the victims had died from poisoning by carbon monoxide, which is, after all, a poison gas.

Firestorms and Carbon Monoxide

Carbon monoxide deaths were usually brought on by the fires set by the Allied bombers' incendiary bombs. To grasp the widespread nature of such deaths, we must first explain the nature of firestorms, which, in turn, will not only explain the high incidence of carbon monoxide poisoning but also some other seemingly fantastic reports pertaining to the victims of air raids.

Firestorms are caused when a number of small fires converge into a single blaze, creating a huge conflagration which in turn sucks in oxygen at high speeds and at very high temperatures. In Hamburg, the conflagration eventually enveloped 4- 1/2 square miles, developed 100 mph winds [G110], and reached temperatures of at least 600 to 800 degrees Celsius [U.S.19](other firestorms have been said to generate temperatures of 1,500 to 2,000 degrees Celsius). [H314] By way of comparison it should be noted that startup temperatures for crematoria are between 600 and 700 degrees Celsius. [I262]

Under such conditions "flash overs" or incidences of spontaneous combustion were not uncommon. [G103] Several testimonies refer to people in the street or in apparent safety in a park whose clothing would suddenly burst into flames with no apparent trigger by way of a spark. The same conditions could be found in the cellars, many which were too hot to excavate until weeks after the raid: when a cellar was reopened, it was not uncommon for the inrush of oxygen to cause the remains of victims, or coal and coke supplies, to burst into flames. [U.S.23,G167]

Carbon monoxide gas played a major role in the fatalities, particularly in incendiary raids, which were the type usually employed against population centers. Although this development was unexpected, it was soon recognized as the typical cause of death for those found in underground cellars or bunkers. [U.S.24f] It was also a frequent cause of death in aboveground casualties, because the concentrations of the gas were so great in the streets and because heart attacks and other pathologies could result from exposure to less than lethal levels. [U.S.24f] In Wesermünde, for example, of 210 people killed in a fire caused by an air raid, 175 perished from carbon monoxide poisoning. [U.S.24] Of the victims of the Hamburg raid, 70 percent were poisoned with the lethal gas. [U.S.24] It should be noted that carbon monoxide was generated not only from incomplete combustion but also by exploding bombs: gas from a high explosive shell contained 60 percent to 70 percent carbon monoxide. [U.S.24] The Germans attempted to develop a number of tests that would test carbon monoxide hemoglobin in corpses even after putrefaction. The indications are simply astonishing: while CO levels of .5 percent can kill, some bodies found in bomb shelters contained concentrations of up to 95 percent. [U.S.25]

Aside from forensic tests, the influence of the poisonous gas could usually be detected by inspecting the posture of the remains. Because carbon monoxide is odorless, tasteless, and invisible, it is possible to inhale a lethal dose without knowing it and then simply fall into a deep sleep. As a result most carbon monoxide victims showed a relaxed and unthreatened posture when found: death was painless and came without premonition. [U.S.25] The results of their surveys presented the

authorities with a dilemma, because there were no effective preventive measures to take. As a result, the secret of the CO poison gas threat was concealed from the public. [U.S.25] The Strategic Bombing Survey would report after the war:

In all the cities visited, carbon monoxide poisoning was regarded as the primary cause of death or injury, sometimes reaching to as much as 80 percent of all incendiary raid casualties. [U.S.28]

As already suggested, cleanup after the raids was a daunting proposition. Many of the dead would be found lying naked in the streets; it is known that many of these had stripped down to their shoes to avoid flashover.

Initially, the corpses would swell, but after a few hours "the bodies shrunk to small objects with hard brownish black skin and charring of different parts, and frequently to ashes and complete disappearance." [U.S.22] This description, from the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey, shows three photographs of shelter dead who have been between 50 percent to 80 percent cremated -- the presence of hair and even clothing indicates that the destruction was achieved through high heat alone, and not through exposure to flame. [U.S.17-21, cf. figs. 8,14-16]

Access to the shelters could take months, and this would affect not only the body counts but also the appearance of the remains. In the absence of testing, the lack of escape movements indicated carbon monoxide poisoning. [U.S.25] The odor of putrefaction was a frequent clue to the location of the dead, except in cases where total cremation had occurred. [U.S.23] Bodies were often found "lying in a thick greasy black mass which was without doubt melted fat tissue." [U.S.23] The systematic shrinkage, probably caused by the burning, which removed the water mass, led the Germans to call such victims *Bombenbrandschrumpf-leichen*, or "fire bomb-shrunken bodies." [U.S.23] "Many basements contained only bits of ashes and in these cases the number of casualties could only be estimated." [U.S.23] Of course, given the temperatures that are known to have been achieved in the course of a fire-storm, none of these characterizations should be surprising. As Gordon Musgrove, a highly decorated pilot for Bomber Command, has noted:

The enormous heat seems to have turned the cellars and underground shelters into crematoria. The exits and emergency exits were surrounded by fires; steel doors, specially installed as a safety precaution, became red-hot or jammed; ceilings, weakened by excessive heat, collapsed under the weight of falling masonry; and even when they were not actually invaded by fire, many rooms were made untenable by smoke or fumes. [G94]

Musgrove was at least half right. The inhabitants of the shelters found themselves in the abnormal situation of hiding in their basements while their buildings burned above them. As the intensive heat dried them out and turned their faces puffy and red before heat stroke set in, the deadly concentrations of carbon monoxide would slowly and silently kill them. The cellars and underground shelters were both crematoria and gas chambers combined.

Civil Defense in the Camps

Three documents should be kept in mind when we try to evaluate the role of civil defense in the concentration camp administration. The first is the LS-Führerprogramm of November, 1940, which stipulated that all existing structures had to be modified for air raid shelter use and that all new structures, particularly in the armaments industry, had to have bomb shelters.

The second document is an order from Oswald Pohl, head of the SS economic administration, dated October 25, 1943, and marked Secret (*Geheim!*) to nineteen concentration camp commandants, including Rudolf Höss at Auschwitz, concerning the care and feeding of prisoners. The importance of this document for our purposes lies not in the fact that Pohl goes into pedantic detail about how the prisoners should be clothed and fed, even to the point of emphasizing that hot meals should not be overcooked, [\[See note\]](#) but in the reasons given for the document. Pohl begins:

In the past two years the labor in the concentration camps on behalf of the armaments industry has become a factor of decisive importance for the war.

The claim is specific; the prisoners are, and have long been, necessary for the armaments industry. Therefore it is not only natural that they would eventually fall under the rubric of the Führerprogramm but also that the camps would eventually be targeted for air attack, as indeed they were. Thus raids on the Buchenwald complex (including Nordhausen) killed thousands of prisoners in April 1945; after the camp was liberated days later, photographs of these dead were interpreted by many as further evidence of Nazi atrocities. [Z222, 223, n13]

The final document, whose existence could be inferred from the above, is an order issued by Heinrich Himmler on February 8, 1943. The order enumerates a number of measures that are to be carried out in the concentration camp system to prevent mass escapes in the event of air raids. [\[See note\]](#) Thus, no later than early February 1943, there was a heightened awareness at the highest ranks of the SS that the concentration camp system was vulnerable to air attack. It should also be noted that it was precisely at this time that the construction office of Auschwitz Birkenau began to receive a flurry of work orders for gastight fixtures. The conclusion, absent presuppositions, would seem to be obvious.

Developing the idea of bomb shelters in the concentration camp system is not easily achieved today.

Many of the records for the camps are not widely available and most records for the eastern camps are still in Russian or Polish archives. But there is still a variety of ways in which we can uncover clues to the existence of bomb shelters in the concentration camp system, above and beyond the documentation already noted.

In the first place, we can inspect the documents that are available and look for objects and descriptions of objects that correspond to materials in the civil defense literature. For example, references to "gastight doors" or "gastight windows" as well as "Blenden" or "Holzblenden" correspond to common civil air defense terms. At the very least, Jean Claude Pressac should be credited with unearthing no fewer than thirty-nine documents that provide strong documentary evidence that each of the Birkenau crematoria was equipped with a gastight bomb shelter. [\[See note\]](#)

A second method would be to inspect the physical evidence, most often through photographs. For example, a number of the small "gastight" doors for Crematoria IV and V were photographed, and there is no doubt that these are identical to the wooden shutters that are discussed extensively in such periodicals as *Gasschutz und Luftschutz*. [ATO426ff, *ibid.*]

Perhaps the strongest example of such correspondence concerns a steel door to a medium-sized room at Majdanek concentration camp. Equipped with the characteristic round peephole with perforated steel cover, this is unambiguously a bomb shelter door, although it has never been recognized as such. Instead, it is usually claimed as the door to a delousing chamber [ATO557], and yet, in spite of this, a replica of this door was later made and is currently on display at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, where it sits as a representation of a door to an extermination gas chamber.

The same method can be applied to still other gastight fixtures. For example, a number of photographs of gastight doors with peepholes from Auschwitz-Birkenau have survived; these closely match diagrams for such doors in the contemporary literature, although, here again, such doors are usually said to have functioned as delousing chambers. [\[See note\]](#) Pressac has argued that the doors to the crematoria morgues were identical, but there is no proof of this.

Another way in which photographs can be analyzed involves looking for tell-tale fixtures and features outside of a building. For example, a photograph of Höss' residence at Auschwitz clearly shows a gastight shutter affixed to the right of the entrance, with a narrow *Lüftungsrohr* just to its left, from which we may safely conclude that the cellar to this building had been converted to air raid use.

Another example concerns the so-called delousing chamber to Block 1. The bricked-in window with a smaller bricked-in aperture is very similar to the outside window indentations of ordinary aboveground shelters, and the gastight door parallels the kind found in the literature.

Yet the fact that this space has been described as a delousing installation makes us cautious about identifying this space as a bomb shelter, and reminds us that photographic analysis on its own is not always conclusive. On the other hand, there is a handful of work orders, which, in their abstracts from Jan Sehn's court, make reference to gastight fixtures, and these not only appear to cover the additions to Block 1 but make other references to materials which, while adequately explained in a bomb shelter context, are inexplicable in an extermination context. [ATO456f, ATO27ff]

For example, work order #516 for June 17, 1943, makes reference to the fittings for a gastight door, which was completed 10/6/43 [sic!]. But under either date the door makes no sense in terms of the claimed operation of the extermination gas chambers.

Another work order, dated July 12, 1943, contains a number of misspellings. Again, in the Polish transcript it reads: "1 Schlüssel. für Gaskammer/Melden bei H.stuf der Apotheke im 44-Revier." Pressac has made the assumption that the "44" is a misspelling for "SS" in its runic form, and therefore translates it as follows: "1 key. for gas chamber. Report to SS captain of the SS-hospital [i.e., SS-Revier] pharmacy." But this translation seems inadequate. In the first place, while Revier can mean hospital, it can also mean "district," or "area," in civil defense terminology. "SS-Revier" therefore is ambiguous, and if we are going to interpolate spellings for "44-Revier" we could just as easily interpolate "LS-Revier," which makes perfect sense, this being a common term for a civil defense district. "Gaskammer," by the same token, could be a bracket form for "Gas[schutz]kammer," a common civil defense term. Furthermore, neither delousing chambers nor "gas chambers" have keys: but gastight bomb shelter doors, if and when they were locked from the outside, were supposed to have a key inside a locked glass box nearby. [CD153f] It is perhaps also relevant that medical supplies in air raid shelters were usually kept in a small cabinet called a "Schutzraumapotheke."

The final work order appears to be directly relevant to Block 1. It reads, again in the Polish transcript, "Entwesungskamer [sic!] Die Beschläge zu 1 Tür, luftdicht mit Spion für Gaskammer, 2/1 Lattentür" (i.e., "Disinfection Chamber. Fittings for 1 door, airtight with peephole, for Gaskammer, 2/1 lath door") The first thing we note is that *Entwesungskammer* has been misspelled: this is chronic in the Polish transcripts. Now it is supposed that Block 1 was at one time a disinfection chamber (*Entwesungskammer*), yet the order refers to an airtight door with peephole for a Gaskammer. But why the use of two distinct terms for what was supposedly the same operation? It is true that Gaskammer can also be used to describe disinfestation facilities -- the drawings for BW 5A and 5B

are very clear about this -- and we stress that no one has ever claimed homicidal gassings in any of these locations: thus, there is nothing sinister about the word "Gaskammer" per se. But one possible explanation would be that the Entwesungskammer, superseded in its use by other facilities, was being converted to a gastight air raid shelter, i.e., Gas[schutz]kammer. In this respect the bricked-in window, and the smaller shutter-sized aperture inside to serve for emergency exit or ventilation, along with the gastight door with peephole (which required bricking in below the old door's lintel), tend to support the bomb shelter thesis. As for the opposite interpretation, there has still been no convincing explanation for the need for a peephole in the gastight door of a delousing facility.

To sum up the issue with respect to Block 1, the inference that it was converted to bomb shelter use has significant corroboration, but not proof. To put it another way, the bomb shelter thesis explains Block 1, its physical features and its relevant work orders. The gas chamber thesis, which holds that references to gastight fixtures usually have a sinister connotation, does not. And that underlines another characteristic of the bomb shelter thesis versus the gas chamber thesis: the bomb shelter thesis explains, while the gas chamber thesis is left with strange clues that cannot be made to fit the model. All three of the documents noted above fit easily into an explanatory model keyed to bomb shelter construction. None of them can be made to fit the extermination model. Of course, one could ask where the original documents are today, since they were obviously in the hands of the Polish authorities at the time of the Höss trials, and their emergence would help resolve these ambiguities. But in this case we have an unprecedented situation, in which the original documents have not yet been made available to Western scholars more than fifty years after their discovery.

Another particularly striking example of photographic evidence concerns the existence of long low mounds in front of the barracks in Birkenau, which appear in both aerial photographs and ground shots. These correspond to the Splittergräbe that are described in other concentration camps, for example, in Buchenwald, and which were designed for internees.

The United States Strategic Bombing Survey describes them as follows:

The trench shelter was slightly below ground and usually covered by a concrete slab from one foot to three feet thick on which one foot to five feet of earth had been placed. The trench was usually about seven feet high on the inside and about six feet wide. The walls were of either concrete or wood. The length of the trench varied seemingly with the available space, but sections or off-sets usually divided it into galleries for some 50 persons each, and minimized a longitudinal blast. At each end of the trench there was an entrance usually through a wooden door, although some had steel. With few exceptions, wooden benches had been provided for each side of the trench. Forced ventilation, toilet facilities, and running water were not available. Little if any protection could be had from a direct hit of the smallest bomb although they were, in most cases, splinter-proof. The advantages of the trench type were rapidity of construction and low cost. This type of protection was standard for slave labor or foreigners but was used by others in emergencies. [CD156]

Still another category of evidence to be evaluated concerns the design drawings for facilities. The Central Sauna at Birkenau, for example, which was constructed after the four crematoria and which stood to the west of Crematoria IV and V, was equipped with a basement which also clearly shows the typical configuration of an emergency exit. [ATO70, Schnitt C-D]

Another characteristic of bomb shelters which is commonly shown in the drawings is the presence of small rooms that lead into larger rooms, that is, gas locks that are sealed with gastight doors (e.g., Vorraum, Gasschleuse). The floor plan of the Auschwitz Crematorium I, in drawings from its role as an air raid shelter clearly show these squarish closetlike entries. [Z253] The drawings for BW 5A and 5B in some versions have clearly marked "Gasschleuse"(gas locks) [ATO57], and the intact Bath and Disinfection Center at Majdanek has three such entries, whose doors are clearly air raid shelter doors. [Z 276]

Some further remarks concerning Majdanek seem appropriate. Most of the alleged gas chambers in that camp were supposed to have been part of the Bath and Disinfection Complex II, whose floor plan is reproduced above. There is no doubt that this structure originally served the purpose of showering arrivals in its still operable shower room, and delousing clothing in other rooms, by a variety of methods, including the use of Zyklon B. [Z 276, and n125 referencing Marszalek] Thus the question concerns the nature of further adaptations.

Room "A," noted above, has occasionally been cited as an extermination gas chamber, but it has a plate glass window with some blue staining around it, which means that the window must have been in place at the same time as any Zyklon usage. But Room "A" also has extensive wooden strutting, as well as a square wooden opening in the ceiling that leads into the roof crawl space. It should be emphasized that this opening was plastered after construction: but this plaster, unlike that around the window, shows no blue staining. [Z 277] Therefore it would apparently not have been exposed to ambient cyanide. The characterization of this room as a homicidal gas chamber is difficult to substantiate in view of the window, the nature of the two inward opening doors, and other characteristics that have been commented on in David Cole's 46 Unanswered Questions about the Gas Chambers. However, the strutting accords with typical expedient adaptations for bomb shelter use, and the wooden opening looks very much like a typical emergency exit. Moreover, the absence of iron berline on the plaster around the ceiling opening would accord with the concept that this room, once used for delousing, was converted later to an air raid shelter.

It should be noted that Room "A" and Room "B" are both equipped with boilers, which, in their original configuration, would have been equipped with fans for blowing hot air. Further, on the far left of the diagram, we can see another gas lock (Vorraum) in a part of the building with no known sinister connotations.

Rooms "B," "C," and "D" are also alleged to have been gas chambers. But interestingly, all three are equipped with steel doors with peepholes covered with perforated steel plate -- in other words, typical German bomb shelter doors -- and the glass of these peepholes is exposed to potential breakage from inside. Finally, these steel doors can be opened from inside or outside [Cole, op. cit.], and appear to have latching mechanisms both inside and outside [ATO, 557]: Michael Berenbaum's *The World Must Know* (p. 138) provides a reverse image of one of these chambers (Room "B"), and there is apparent smudging precisely at the points on the door where the latching mechanisms would be visible.

Finally, and returning now to Birkenau, there is a further characteristic of Morgue 1 in both Crematoria II and III which is significant. Morgue 1 of Crematorium II has a vertical passageway along its western wall which features a concrete lid and metal rungs.

While Pressac describes this as a sewer, it is unclear why a sewer entrance that would allow people to climb in and out would be necessary next to Morgue 1. [ATO228,229] According to the bomb shelter thesis, this would be an emergency exit. It should be noted that Crematorium III's remains are similarly equipped.

There is also oral testimony, as well as other records. Numerous testimonies describe air raids at the Auschwitz complex, including testimonies concerning seeking shelter in below ground spaces. Danuta Czech's *Auschwitz Chronicle* [See note] enumerates several raids on the Auschwitz complex, including a raid that ended up dropping bombs on Birkenau by mistake (this destroyed a "dugout" in Czech's words, clearly a reference to a trench shelter). The testimony of Dr. Nyiszli specifically describes the use of Morgue 1 of Crematorium II as a bomb shelter, although he also claims the same space was used for a gas chamber. [See note] Other testimonies from Buchenwald, for example, describe trench shelters, while some subcamps of Buchenwald (i.e., Nordhausen) clearly describe Stollen.

To sum up, we can reconstruct the existence of bomb shelter facilities from a number of different sources. The two most prominent are language that correspond to the civil defense literature, and photographs or drawings that depict ordinary civil defense features, such as gastight doors, shutters, wire screens or other protected apertures, emergency exits, ventilation ducts, camouflage, bricked in windows, ventilation chimneys, and cellar spaces that suggest adaptations or are equipped with the characteristic zigzag construction of emergency exits.

It should be stressed that the identification of features in photographs does not prove bomb shelter use. However, the photographic evidence, supplemented by the documentary evidence and drawings, seems fairly conclusive -- the crematoria at Birkenau were adapted for bomb shelter use at a time when several other locations in that camp were also being adapted for that purpose. Keeping in mind the stipulations of the LS-Führerprogramm, which mandated that all buildings old and new should provide bomb and gas protection, the claim that the Birkenau crematoria contained gastight bomb shelters should arouse no further controversy. The question "Why would there be bomb shelters in crematoria?" is incorrectly framed: the crematoria were buildings, buildings were supposed to have bomb shelters, and therefore they had them. The real question is that, given that the crematoria served as bomb shelters, why has this fact never been recognized? [See note]

Conclusions

The primary impetus for this article arose out of the desire to explore the claim that the Birkenau crematoria were equipped with gastight bomb shelters. But in the course of exploring this issue we found out much about the experience of the German people in the air war. Therefore it seems fitting that our conclusions begin and end with remarks on the bombing campaign, and the defense against it, among the civilian population.

We have found that the civil defense establishment in Germany was huge. With a 1939 enrollment in the RLB of twelve million, we are describing a body that embraced about one seventh of the population: it seems likely that there were as many people involved in civil air defense, at least part-time, as in all three branches of the Wehrmacht.

At a cost that would project to billions of marks, we have found that tremendous sums were expended on shelters of all types, including what we would conservatively estimate to be hundreds of above and below ground public shelters of reinforced concrete, thousands of public access shelters (öLSR), and tens of thousands of air raid cellars (LS-Keller) and home shelters. The regulations stipulated that all of these shelters were to be equipped for chemical warfare defense, and the references to gas- or airtight steel doors in the literature and testimony are so frequent as to scarcely deserve further comment.

Supporting these structures were the clearly articulated supporting staffs of the SHD, numbering thousands, which included decontamination crews especially equipped for chemical warfare, and specially designated locations (laundries, public baths) that in the event of gas attack would have

their normal function subordinated to the role of chemical warfare decontamination. The decontamination crews, in addition, were specially trained and equipped, which soon led to their involvement in corpse handling and other sanitation procedures. The sanitation service was in turn engaged in all kinds of sanitation prophylaxis including disinfection, pest control, and delousing of citizens to prevent the spread of infectious diseases including typhus. The fundamental identity of the decontamination, disinfection, and delousing paradigms could hardly be more clear.

Running throughout this service and its wartime operation was an intense awareness of the possibilities of gas warfare. Not merely the decontamination squads are evidence of this, but also the gas testing centers, the locations earmarked for decontaminating belongings, the special trucks loaded with decontamination equipment, the twelve million gas masks issued, the demands for gastight doors, and the ventilation systems that could filter poison gas. And, as we have seen, the fear of poison gas even entered the popular mind, such that the grotesque appearance of the victims would lead many to rashly assume that the enemy had decided to use this terrible weapon.

It would take a philosopher or a psychologist to appreciate what happened subsequently. For the documentary, forensic, and photographic evidence clearly shows that the majority of the hundreds of thousands of German men, women, and children indiscriminately killed in the air war perished from the inhalation of poisonous carbon monoxide gas and in many cases were at least partially cremated. Yet their plight was totally submerged in the postwar period by even more horrifying claims of gassing and burning made against Germans. One begins to wonder whether the suffering of the German people was forgotten, or whether it was simply inverted.

Contrasting the situation among the civilian population with that in the concentration camps, we find ample reason to expect analogous levels of bomb and gas protection. The camps were important to the war effort. Himmler expressed concerns about prisoners escaping from the system, including Auschwitz Birkenau, during air raids at precisely the time when Auschwitz Birkenau began to make numerous requests for gastight doors and other gastight fixtures such as were common for civil defense in other parts of Germany.

In addition to the morgues in the crematoria, which show evidence of having been converted from morgues to serve also as anti-gas shelters and decontamination centers in the event of gas attack, we find that the dormant morgue in Crematorium I in Auschwitz was in fact converted to a bomb shelter. And, given what we have found out about the need for cleanliness in the handling of corpses when discussing the bombing victims, the original presence of showers for corpse handlers in any crematoria should not surprise us.

The blueprints for the Birkenau Central Sauna also show evidence of dual purpose, and the characteristic aperture of an emergency exit can be clearly seen in its cellar. The disinfestation blocks BW 5A and BW 5B, which were no longer used for that purpose after late 1943, are equipped with gas locks and thus could have been easily converted, if indeed they were not built with a dual purpose in mind. Block 1 at Auschwitz provides visual evidence of having been converted to a bomb shelter in late 1943. The commandant's house was clearly converted for bomb shelter use. Finally, it appears that the prisoners themselves were provided splinter trenches in front of every barrack. Apparently there were dozens, if not hundreds, of air raid shelters at Auschwitz Birkenau; and again, bomb protection in the German scheme of things also meant gas protection.

Turning now to Majdanek, we find that the Bath and Disinfection Complex II was equipped with a gas lock at one end of the building as well as standard steel bomb shelter doors with peepholes. In addition, the interior rooms had added wooden strutting for reinforcing the roof, and at least one wooden emergency exit. In the context of the documents, the contemporary civil defense literature, and the photographic evidence, it should be obvious that the Bath and Disinfection complex at Majdanek was adapted at some point in its existence to provide bomb and gas protection, and that its showers were meant to serve as a decontamination center for gassing victims.

We should note here that this same complex was claimed by the Soviets in a Special Commission report from 1944 to have been a site where 1.5 million people were gassed with Zyklon B. Yet, while no one claims more than a tenth of that number of victims for Majdanek today [Z 277, n129 surveys contemporary downward revisions], neither has anyone explained how these manifest bomb shelter features could have been misunderstood or misinterpreted for so many years.

The nature of the German people's plight in the air war has also been misunderstood. Although doubtless thousands perished in utter helplessness, hundreds of thousands more survived, thanks to the skillful preparations of the people and the RLB, and due to the courage and resourcefulness of the sergeant majors, fire wardens, and countless others. We recall that the twin objectives of the air war were the destruction of German industry and the breaking of German morale. But neither of these twin objectives was achieved, and in this light it is doubly tragic that more than fifty thousand brave British airmen perished in a fruitless venture that left a blot on Britain's conduct of the war. Far from being mere passive martyrs, the German people won the air war because they, too, did not "flag or fail." Even so, their sacrifice remains unmourned and unremembered.

Unremembered and unmourned: except for a curious and ironic artifact. If you travel to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC, you will find many reminders of the terrible ordeal of the Jewish people in the course of their persecution by the German National Socialists. These objects serve as memorials to the many Jews who suffered, died, and were killed in what has come to be known as the Holocaust. But in another part of the building, alone, and

dimly lit, we find a silent sentinel, which, by its presence, serves as an admonishment to those who insist on the most narrow interpretation of history, an almost Till Eulenspiegel-like reminder that remembrance is irrepressible, and a memorial to those German women and children who perished in the gas and flames of the air war holocaust: a steel door, with handles, a peephole, with a perforated steel cover -- a German bomb shelter door.

Key to Sources Used

A	Gerald Astor, <i>A Blood-Dimmed Tide</i> (NY: 1992)
ATO	Jean Claude Pressac, <i>Auschwitz: Technique and Operation of the Gas Chambers</i> (NY: The Beate Klarsfeld Foundation, 1989)
B	Helmut Vogt, <i>Das 5. Luftschutzrevier von Bonn</i> (Bonn: 1994)
CD	United States Strategic Bombing Survey, <i>Civilian Defense Division Final Report</i> , 2nd edition (n.p.: 1947)
D	David Irving, <i>The Destruction of Dresden</i> (NY: 1964)
DD	Rudolf Höss, <i>Death Dealer: The Memoirs of the SS Kommandant at Auschwitz</i> (ed. Steven Paskuly), (NY: 1996)
G	Gordon Musgrove, <i>Operation Gomorrah: The Hamburg Firestorm Raids</i> (London: 1981)
H	Max Hastings, <i>Bomber Command</i> (NY: 1989)
I	Kenneth V. Iserson, <i>Death to Dust: What Happens to Dead Bodies?</i> (Tucson, AZ: 1994)
N	Georg Wolfgang Schramm, <i>Der zivile Luft-schutz in Nürnberg, 1933-1945</i> (Nuremberg: 1983)
P	Walter Steiner, <i>Die Parkhöhle von Weimar: Abwasserstollen, Luftschutzkeller, Untertagmuseum</i> (Bremen: 1996)
S	Joachim Stahl, <i>Bunker und Stollen für den Luftschutz im Raum Siegen</i> (Kreuztal: 1980)
SF	Kurt Vonnegut, <i>Slaughterhouse Five</i> (NY: 1993)
U.S.	United States Strategic Bombing Survey, <i>The Effect of Bombing on Health and Medical Care in Germany</i> (Washington, DC: 1945)
V	Johannes Steinhoff, et al., eds., <i>Voices from the Third Reich</i> (NY: 1994)
Z	Ernst Gauss [Germar Rudolf], <i>Grundlagen zur Zeitgeschichte</i> (Tübingen: 1994)

Notes

1. "Vergasungskeller" was first published on August 6, 1996; revised on November 7, 1996, in which form it was published by the Adelaide Institute in January, 1997; and revised again on January 7, 1997 and June 26, 1997. The article may be found on Dr. Butz' web site at: <http://pubweb.acns.nwu.edu/~abutz/di/dau/vk.html>
2. "Technique and Operation of German Anti-Gas Shelters: A Refutation of J. C. Pressac's 'Criminal Traces'" was first published on the CODOH website on March 23, 1997, revised April 7, 1997, further revisions April 30, 1997. It is located at <http://www.codoh.com/incon/incompressac.html> An expanded version of "Technique and Operations," "Wartime Germany's Anti-Gas Air Raid Shelters: A Refutation of Pressac's 'Criminal Traces,'" was published in the Journal of Historical Review 18, no. 4 (July-August 1989), pp. 7-30.
3. Pressac's magnum opus, *Auschwitz: Technique and Operation of the Gas Chambers*, is hard to find. His *The Crematoria of Auschwitz* (NY:1993) is more accessible. Beginning with an article in Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp (Bloomington, IN: 1994), Gutman, Berenbaum, and Gutman, eds., he has been assisted by Robert Jan van Pelt, who has also written, with Deborah Dwork, *Auschwitz: 1270 to Present* (NY:1996). The general thrust of all of these interpretations is consistent.
4. An excellent treatment of the evolution of British strategic bombing thinking may be found in Hastings, Bomber Command, esp. pp. 37-58; 106-122.
5. The Reichsluftschutzbund is usually rendered ARP or A.R.P. by British historians, apparently on the analogy with their own Air Raid Protective services. Its members would extend all the way down to the operation of each shelter: the SHD, on the other hand, worked from centralized locations.
6. On municipal disinfection centers in Germany, see "Die Umgestaltung und Vergrößerung der Desinfektionsanstalt der Stadt Dortmund" in Gesundheits-Ingenieur, September 27, 1941, p. 523ff.
7. H. Friedlander and S. Milton, Archives of the Holocaust, vol. 20, document 169, p. 462ff, 463.
8. Raul Hilberg, The Destruction of the European Jews (NY: 1960), p. 584.
9. See the extensive discussion of the "Criminal Traces" in "Technique and Operation of the German Anti-Gas Shelters."
10. Ibid.
11. Danuta Czech, Auschwitz Chronicle: 1939-1945 (NY:1997), p. 692, 697n, p. 708. These entries fairly well explode the claim that Auschwitz was never bombed. My thanks to Richard

Widmann for these references, and for other editorial suggestions.

12. Miklos Nyiszli, *Auschwitz* (NY: 1993), p. 128.
13. It should be stressed that the arguments set forth here in 1997 have undergone significant elaboration. Part of this has been due to strong critiques from both Carlo Mattogno and Robert Jan van Pelt, and part is due to a number of documents obtained in 2000 and published in "Bomb Shelters in Birkenau"(www.codoh.com/incon/inconbsinbirk.html). The documents in that article prove that civil defense concerns, and thus gastight fixtures, were common at Auschwitz Birkenau, but, at the same time, there are ongoing disputes concerning the appropriateness of the Bomb Shelter Thesis in explaining such gastight fixtures for the crematoria.

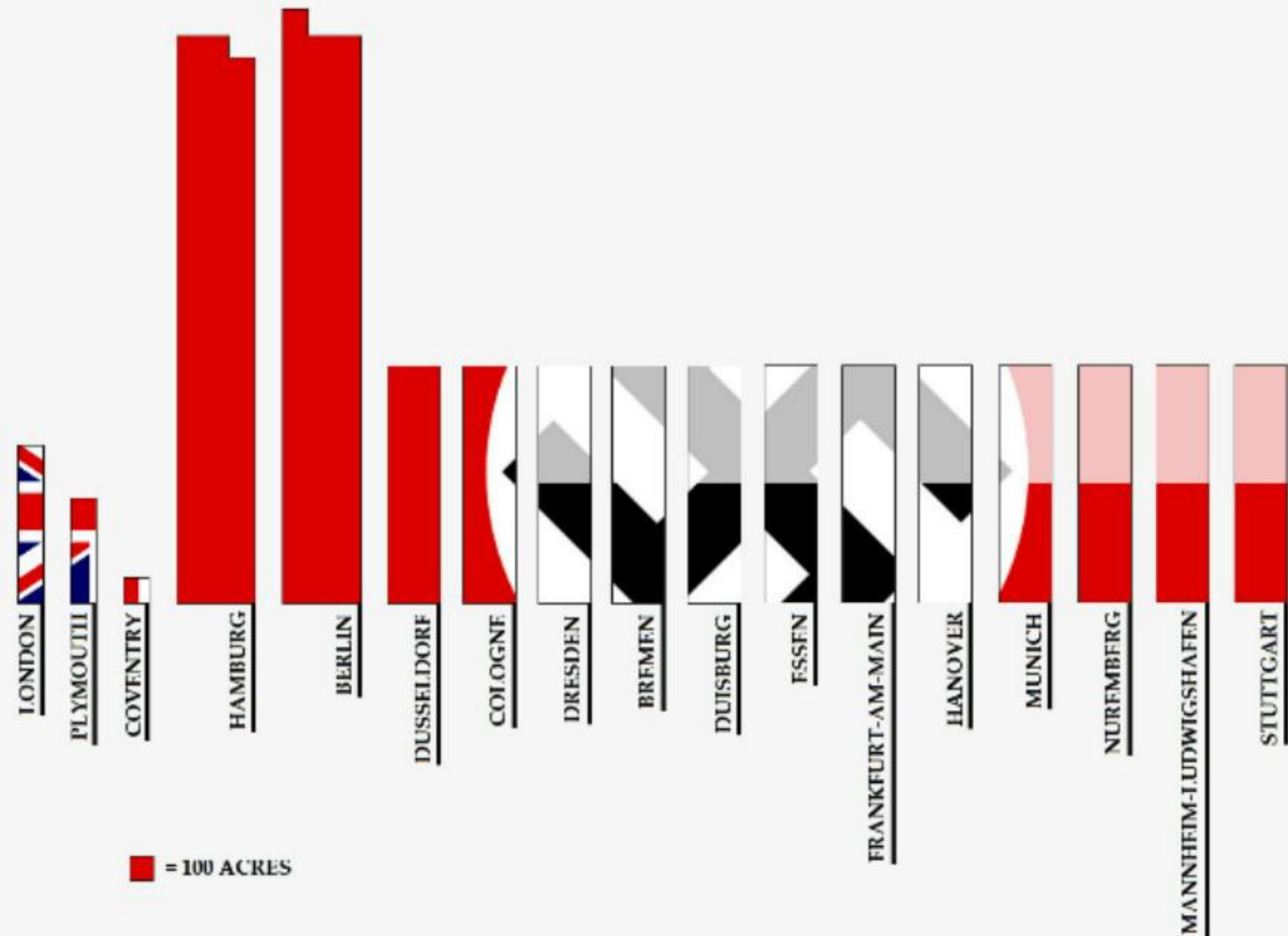
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Samuel Crowell is the pen name of an American writer who describes himself as a "moderate revisionist." At the University of California (Berkeley) he studied philosophy, foreign languages (including German, Polish, Russian, and Hungarian), and history, including Russian, German, and German-Jewish history. He continued his study of history at Columbia University. For six years he worked as a college teacher.

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Review

Death From On High

- BOMBER COMMAND: THE MYTHS AND REALITY OF THE STRATEGIC BOMBING OFFENSIVE 1939-45 by Max Hastings. New York, The Dial Press/James Wade, 1979. 469 pp with Notes, Appendices, Illustrations, Bibliography, Index. ISBN: 0-8037-0154-X.

reviewed by Charles Lutton

One of the most controversial campaigns of the Second World War was the bombing offensive against Germany. British, and to a lesser extent American, air commanders believed that Germany could be defeated by bombing alone. Max Hastings, a distinguished British war correspondent, has written a masterful history of the British Bomber Command, based upon recently released official records, unpublished letters, diaries and manuscripts, and interviews of former aircrew, senior officers and government officials.

After the First World War, air power captured the imagination of military theorists, such as Giulio Douhet in Italy, Billy Mitchell in the United States, and Hugh Trenchard in Britain. Only the British, under the leadership of Trenchard, fully accepted the notion that there was virtually no limit to the independent use of bomber aircraft in future wars, which could be used to blast any any opponent into submission. From the outset of its existence, the Royal Air Force was fashioned to conduct strategic area terror bombing. (note 1)

A corollary of the Trenchard Bomber Doctrine was that defense was useless because, as Stanley Baldwin reminded Parliament in 1932, "the bomber will always get through." Although the British devoted few funds to research and development for the RAF during the inter-war period, the government was shocked when the C-in-C of Bomber Command, Sir Edgar Ludlow-Hewitt, informed his superiors in July 1939 that their front-line bombers had been made obsolete by the development of monoplane fighters armed with cannons and machineguns. British bombers lacked speed, adequate defensive armament, bombs large enough to sufficiently damage targets, and navigation equipment to enable planes to locate targets hundreds of miles away. After the outbreak of hostilities it was discovered that British bombers tended to burn easily when attacked by enemy aircraft.

During the war the bomber offensive went through three phases. The first, from 1939 to early 1940, was characterized by ineffective attacks against military targets. Daylight sorties were found to be almost suicidal when intercepted by German fighters, while Bomber Command was incapable of locating targets at night. Hastings cites the experience of the 10th Bomber Squadron, based in Yorkshire, which mistook the Thames estuary for the Rhine and bombed an RAF station at Bassingbourn in Cambridgeshire, doing little damage. As the author explains, "again and again at this period, Germany would be genuinely unaware that Bomber Command had been attempting to attack a specific target or even a specific region. There was merely a litter of explosives on farms, homes, lakes, forests and -- occasionally -- on factories and installations from end to end of the Reich."

In June 1940, after the fall of France, the bomber offensive entered its second phase. Rejecting out of hand any suggestions for a negotiated peace settlement, Churchill felt there was little else to do besides bomb Germany. A year later, the Cabinet Secretary, D.M. Butt, presented a critique of the effectiveness of Bomber Command against targets in France and Germany. He reported that less than one-third of the attacks came within five miles of the aiming point and only ten per cent of the bombs fell within the target area. A.V. Hill, one of the founding fathers of British radar and a Member of Parliament, informed his colleagues that great resources were being squandered on Bomber Command and "the idea of bombing a well-defended enemy into submission or seriously affecting his morale -- of even doing substantial damage to him -- is an illusion. We know that most of the bombs we drop hit nothing of importance."

Despite the fact that the Butt Report had clearly exposed the bankruptcy of Trenchard's strategic bombing theory, in late 1941 the British decided to expand the bomber offensive by ordering attacks against urban areas in Germany, since the

RAF was incapable of hitting military targets with precision. The authors of the official British history, Sir Charles Webster and Dr. Noble Frankland, have argued that by late 1941 there were only two choices left to Churchill, area bombing or no bombing at all.

Hastings rejects that specious assertion and points out alternatives, a third choice being "to persist in the face of whatever difficulties, in attempting to hit precision targets" and a "fourth and more realistic alternative: faced by the fact that Britain's bombers were incapable of a precision campaign, there was no compulsion upon the Government to authorize the huge bomber programme that was now to be undertaken. Aircraft could have been transferred to the Battle of the Atlantic and the

Middle and Far East where they were so urgently needed, and many British strategists would have wholeheartedly defended the decision to move them... There were alternatives to the area campaign, albeit at great cost to the amour propre of the RAF."

In any event, the bomber offensive entered its third phase. On 14 February 1942, the Air Ministry issued a directive authorizing unrestricted area bombing. Churchill's repulsive scientific adviser, Lord Cherwell, provided the final rationalization for the campaign, by claiming that the "dehousing" of the German workers and their families would doubtlessly "break the spirit of the people." The Chief of Air Staff, Sir Charles Portal, reminded his Deputy on 15 February, "Ref. the new bombing directive: I suppose it is clear that the aiming-points are to be built-up areas, not, for instance, the dockyards or aircraft factories ... This must be made quite clear if it is not already understood." Sir Arthur Harris, a fanatical proponent of area bombing, was appointed the new head of Bomber Command.

The first target of the new phase was the old North German town of Lübeck. It was not a place of any military or industrial importance to the Germans and so was lightly defended. But Harris had been "searching for an area target that they could find, strike, and utterly destroy." Lübeck was thus chosen, says Hastings, because "above all it was an old, closely-packed medieval town that would burn far better than the spacious avenues of any modern metropolis ...

Lübeck, then, did not attract attention because it was important, but became important because it could be burned."

Aided by the new navigation device Gee, Bomber Command "brownd" (the RAF euphemism for burning a town) Lübeck on 28 March 1942 and a month later gave the same treatment to another medieval town, Rostock. The bombers tried out what became the standard pattern for attacking a city: flares were dropped to mark the target, then 4,000 pound high-explosive "cookies" were used to blast open doors and windows, accompanied by incendiaries to create huge fires. Characteristically, whatever industry was located in Lübeck and Rostock was back at near full production within days, since factories were located on the outskirts of cities, or in the suburbs, far from the town centers, which were the aiming points of Bomber Command raids.

The author reminds his readers of the great public relations impact of many Bomber Command operations, such as the thousand-plane raids Harris launched, starting with the attack on Cologne on 30 May 1942. There was no military reason why over 1,000 RAF bombers had to be sent, but it did capture the imagination of the British public. As Hastings remarks, "the Prime Minister, with his great sense of theatre, was won over immediately. Only the Admiralty, in the midst of the Battle of the Atlantic, were exasperated by such gimmicky enterprises as they struggled to fight their convoys through."

At the Casablanca Conference in January 1943, the Allies decided to delay the cross-Channel invasion of Western Europe until the Spring of 1944. Harris and General Carl Spaatz, commander of the 8th U.S. Army Air Force in Europe, believed they could defeat Germany without a land invasion by air attacks. (note 2) Bomber Command increased the tempo and destructive power of its attacks on German cities throughout 1943 and early 1944.

It was also at Casablanca where the Allies declared their policy of "Unconditional Surrender," which nullified any effect bomber raids might have had in undermining German morale and bringing the war to an end. Britain's flak defence chief, General Sir Frederick Pile, told B.H. Liddell Hart that,

"Winston is pinning all his faith to the bombing offensive now. The devastation it causes suits his temperament, and he would be disappointed at a less destructive ending to the war." 3

Bomber Command was not short of informed critics. Within policy circles the service departments and scientists attacked Harris's operations on strategic and practical grounds. It has been estimated that one-third of Britain's industrial capacity was committed to Bomber Command, along with the best of their high technology. Because of the vast resources consumed by Bomber Command, the British had to import vast quantities of war material (such as tanks, trucks, landing craft, etc.) from the United States. In human terms, 7,448 Bomber Command aircrew had died between September 1939 and February 1942. From the time Harris took charge of the expanded bombing operations until the end of the war, an additional 56,000 commissioned officers and NCOs lost their lives, more officers than the British lost during World War I.

Civilian opponents of Bomber Command comprised an articulate, though tiny, minority. One group, The Bombing Restriction Committee, distributed leaflets headlined "STOP BOMBING CIVILIANS." George Bell, Bishop of Chichester, was probably denied elevation to the Archbishopric of Canterbury because of his opposition to area bombing. Hastings goes on to discuss the opposition by Britain's leading military theorists, J.F.C. Fuller and B.H. Liddell Hart, but emphasizes that these distinguished critics had no impact upon policy. (note 4)

Hastings skillfully assembles a wide-range of material in his chapter examining conditions within Germany from 1940-1944. Like Burton Klein and Alan Milward, the author dispels the myth that Hitler had armed Germany to the teeth with a centrally-directed totalitarian economy.⁵ Hitler had rearmd the Wehrmacht in breadth, not depth, and unlike the Allies, sought to employ the minimum possible resources to achieve a given objective. Germany did not begin full economic mobilization until 1943, and at the end of that year six million workers were still employed in consumer industries.

Because of the slack that existed in the German economy, Arms Minister Albert Speer was able to vastly increase military production, despite the mounting ferocity of bomber attacks in 1943 and 1944. "The morale of the German people remained unbroken to the end," Hastings points out, even though Bomber Command "destroyed centuries of construction and culture."

The author also provides a good analysis of the problems faced by German home defense forces. The Luftwaffe was commanded by the incompetent Hermann Göring and a coherent strategy to combat Allied bombing raids was never devised. Only a relatively modest portion of the Luftwaffe's resources were earmarked for night-fighters and home defense in general. Hitler did not authorize a freeze on costly bomber production and a concentration on fighters until June 1944. It is likely that even a slightly larger investment in home defense forces could have brought the bomber offensive to an abrupt halt by the end of 1943.

Bomber Command launched a massive series of assaults against the Ruhr, Hamburg, and Berlin during 1943 and early 1944. Thousands of acres were burned and hundreds of thousands of Germans were killed. The RAF lost over 4,100 bombers. Yet German arms production increased. Harris nevertheless claimed on 7 December 1943, that he could bring about a German collapse by 1 April 1944.

The first real breakthrough in the bomber offensive occurred in the Spring of 1944, when U.S. long-range Mustang fighters became available in large numbers. Mustangs escorted USAAF bombers on daylight raids against synthetic oil plants, the Achilles Heel of the German war economy. The cream of the Luftwaffe's experienced fighter pilots were lost in the war of attrition waged by the Americans. From June through August 1944, the total percentage of U.S. bombing efforts against oil targets never exceeded 17 per cent of their total bombs dropped, but the results were a catastrophe for the Germans. By the late summer of 1944, little fuel was available to power the thousands of tanks and planes (including jet fighters and bombers) Speer's factories were producing.

Harris had been forced to suspend his area attacks in April 1944 and Bomber Command had directed its efforts to providing tactical support for the invasion of France. In July, the British called for a renewed "all-out attack by every means at our disposal on German civilian morale." Attacks on oil plants were dismissed by Harris as "merely the latest in the long line of 'panacea targets' with which so many knaves and fools sought to divert him from the task of destroying Germany."

Spaatz ordered additional attacks on Germany's oil plants and transportation network in September 1944. Bomber Command stepped up its devastation of German cities. Hastings devotes a revealing chapter to describe the destruction of Darmstadt on the night of 11/12 September, which was typical of the sort of targets remaining to the British by that date. Darmstadt was another classic representative of German culture which produced less than two-tenths of one percent of Germany's total production and an infinitesimal amount of its war production. A minimum of ten per cent of Darmstadt's population died as a result of the firestorm that was created and a Russian POW camp was totally destroyed. Over-all, industries located in the area lost about two weeks production.

Between January and May 1945, Harris very reluctantly allowed 26 per cent of Bomber Command's attacks to be directed against Germany's remaining oil facilities, while he continued to concentrate his resources on area bombing. On 13/14 February, Dresden was torched. Interestingly, this touched off the first general wave of negative reaction against area bombing. An Associated Press dispatch reported that the "Allied air chiefs" had begun "deliberate terror bombing of German population centers ..." General Marshall claimed, falsely, that Dresden had been bombed at the request of the Soviets. Churchill, who with Portal had ordered the attack, tried to cover his involvement and on 28 March 1945, drafted a memo to the Chiefs of Staff in which he criticized the destruction of Dresden and called "for more precise concentration upon military objectives, such as oil and communications behind the immediate battle-zone, rather than on mere acts of terror and wanton destruction, however impressive." Hastings composes a remarkable portrait of Churchill and spares nothing in exposing the crucial role played in the terror bombing by that great mountebank.

Max Hastings' *Bomber Command* is an important contribution to our understanding of World War II. As he notes in his final chapter assessing the work of the strategic bomber offensive, the two positive achievements were made by the Americans: the defeat of the Luftwaffe by Mustang fighters, and the campaign to destroy Germany's synthetic oil industry. But, he concludes, "the cost of the bomber offensive in life, treasure and moral superiority over the enemy tragically outstripped the results that it achieved."

Notes

1. For an overview contrasting the development of air power in Britain and Germany in the inter-war period, see Williamson Murray, "British and German Air Doctrine Between the Wars," *Air University Review* (March-April 1980) pp 39-57.
2. On the American contribution to the bombing offensive in the European theater, see Thomas Coffey, *Decision Over Schweinfurt*, New York, McKay, 1977.
3. Britain's outstanding military theorists, Maj. Gen. J. F. C. Fuller and Capt. B. H. Liddell Hart both recognized the futility of the "Unconditional Surrender" policy. See Liddell Hart, *The Second World War*, New York, Putnam, 1972, and Fuller, *The Conduct of War, 1789-1961*, New York, Minerva Press, 1961. Fuller pointed out that Churchill was at first

enthusiastic about "unconditional surrender" but changed his mind and in a cable to his Foreign Secretary dated 9 August 1943 advised, "Merely harping on 'unconditional surrender' with no prospect of mercy... may well lead to no surrender at all," Fuller, *The Conduct of War*, p 287.

4. For a useful discussion of the opposition to area bombing in Britain and the United States, see James J. Martin's essay, "The Bombing and Negotiated Peace Questions-in 1944," *Revisionist Viewpoints*, Colorado Springs, Ralph Myles Publisher, 1971.
5. See Burton Klein, *Germany's Economic Preparations for War*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1959, and Alan Milward, *The German Economy at War*, London, London University, 1965. Hastings cites Milward, but not Klein's classic study.

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Der alliierte Luftkrieg - TEIL IV

Tod über Deutschland 1940-1945

(Quelle: DMZ - Nr. 42 / Dezember 2004)

Am 3. September 1939 hatte Frankreich dem Deutschen Reich den Krieg erklärt. Acht Monate später, am 9. Mai 1940, begann die deutsche Offensive im Westen. Am 11. Mai beschloß das britische Kabinett, dem Bomber Command den Luftkrieg gegen das deutsche Hinterland freizugeben. In der folgenden Nacht warfen britische Flugzeuge zum ersten Mal ungezielt Bomben auf Wohngebiete von Mönchengladbach. Und von da an erfolgten solche Angriffe auf Städte im Ruhrgebiet Nacht für Nacht. Bis zum 13. Mai 1940, also innerhalb von nur zwei Tagen, registrierte die deutsche Seite insgesamt 51 britische Luftangriffe auf nichtmilitärische Ziele neben 14 Angriffen auf militärische Ziele wie Brücken, Bahnlinien, Rüstungsindustrie und Werkanlagen.

[Zurück](#)

Jeder Anflug bedeutet Fliegeralarm

Seit dem 25. August 1940 griffen britische Bomber nachts Berlin an, und zwar nicht etwa, um gezielt kriegswichtige Ziele zu treffen - dazu war die Royal Air Force (RAF) nicht in der Lage, weil man geeignete Bombenzielgeräte nicht entwickelt hatte. Seit Jahren war das Flächenbombardement als die wirksamste Form des Luftkrieges festgelegt worden, und dazu brauchte man keine Treffergenauigkeit, wie die deutsche Seite sie mit Hilfe der Sturzkampfbomber (Stuka) erreichte.

Da zu jener Zeit die schweren viermotorigen Bomber mit großer Reichweite und starker Abwehrbewaffnung, an denen die britische Industrie seit 1936 arbeitete, noch nicht zur Verfügung standen, waren die Schäden zunächst verhältnismäßig bescheiden, doch bedeutete jeder Einflug für die deutschen Städte Fliegeralarm.

Hamburg sollte "pulverisiert" werden

Die Deutschen begannen zu murren, weil Deutschland nicht zurückschlug und sie ungeschützt den englischen Bomben ausgesetzt waren. Der britische Informationsminister Duff Cooper verkündete zudem im August 1940 im Rundfunk und in den Zeitungen, die Royal Air Force werde nunmehr Hamburg "pulverisieren". Die deutsche Luftwaffe war auf den strategischen Luftkrieg gegen die Zivilbevölkerung weder technisch noch in der Ausbildung ihrer Piloten eingerichtet.

Und so setzte man, um die Moral der deutschen Bevölkerung zu stabilisieren, auf Propaganda.

Dazu gehörte die öffentliche Rede Adolf Hitlers, in der er die Propaganda von britischer Seite aufgriff und erklärte, wenn die Briten deutsche Städte "pulverisieren" wollten, dann werde Deutschland die britischen Städte "ausradieren".

Luftangriff auf London erst im September 1940

Der erste Teil dieser Propaganda-Auseinandersetzung wird in der deutschen Öffentlichkeit gern verschwiegen; dafür wird aber Hitlers Drohung, man werde englische Städte "ausradieren", als "Beweis" für die geplante barbarische Kriegführung des Deutschen Reiches bewertet. Tatsächlich aber geschah nichts dergleichen. Erst nachdem die Briten achtmal die Reichshauptstadt Berlin angegriffen hatten, erfolgte am 6./7. September 1940 ein deutscher Luftangriff auf London - allerdings gezielt auf militärische Objekte wie Hafenanlagen, Bahnhöfe, Rüstungswerke und Elektrizitätswerke. Es war den Besatzungen ausdrücklich verboten, ihre Bomben auf Wohngebiete abzuwerfen, da damit "kein kriegsentscheidender Erfolg zu erwarten" sei.

Deutschland hielt am Völkerrecht fest

Die deutschen Luftangriffe sollten die geplante Invasion der britischen Inseln einleiten. Dazu gehörte, daß strategisch wichtige Verkehrswege, Hafenanlagen, Schiffe, Rüstungsindustrie, vor allem aber die britischen Flughäfen bombardiert wurden. Es gab einen Führerbefehl, der Angriffe bei nicht einwandfreier Sicht auf London zunächst verbot.

Auch als Deutschland Vergeltung für britische Angriffe auf deutsche Wohnviertel androhte und dann ausführte - Deutschland hielt immer noch an dem internationalen Völkerrecht fest, das Angriffe auf Nichtkombattanten verbot -, wurden diese Vergeltungsangriffe ausschließlich gegen kriegswichtige und für die Versorgung der Großstadt London lebenswichtige Ziele gerichtet. "Terrorangriffe gegen reine Wohnviertel sollen als letztes Druckmittel vorbehalten bleiben und daher jetzt noch nicht zur Anwendung kommen", lautete die offizielle Weisung.

Briten ignorierten Kriegsrecht

Auch im Winter 1940/41 gab es keinen deutschen strategischen Luftkrieg gegen die englische Zivilbevölkerung.

Alle Angriffe waren gegen kriegswichtige Ziele gerichtet, was nicht ausschloß, daß unbeabsichtigt auch zivile Anlagen getroffen und Zivilisten getötet wurden. Diese Art der deutschen Luftkriegführung wird auch von der offiziellen britischen Geschichtsschreibung ausdrücklich anerkannt.

Die Briten hatten sich von Anfang an nicht an das internationale Völkerrecht gehalten, weil sie - formal korrekt - darauf hinwiesen, daß es keine völkerrechtlichen Regelungen speziell für den Luftkrieg gebe. Man kannte ihn zur Zeit der Haager Landkriegsordnung noch nicht. Die deutsche Seite hingegen, wie auch die Regierungen der meisten anderen zivilisierten Staaten, vertrat die Ansicht, daß, "solange es kein spezielles Lufkriegs-Völkerrecht gibt, die Bevölkerung und die Kriegführenden (Nichtkombattanten und Kombattanten) unter dem Schutz und der Herrschaft der Grundsätze des Völkerrechts bleiben, wie sie sich ergeben aus den unter gesitteten Völkern feststehenden Gebräuchen, aus den Gesetzen der Menschlichkeit und aus den Forderungen des öffentlichen Gewissens", so die Präambel des "Abkommens betreffend die Gesetze und Gebräuche des Landkrieges" von 1895 und 1904, der sogenannten "Martens'schen Klausel".

Aus dem bisher Aufgeführten geht hervor, daß nicht der Luftkrieg als solcher völkerrechtswidrig war. Richteten sich die Angriffe gegen militärische oder sonstige kriegswichtige Ziele, aber natürlich auch gegen die kämpfenden Truppen an der Front, ihre Bunker, ihre Stellungen, ihre Nachschubwege, dann waren diese taktischen Luftangriffe vom Völkerrecht gedeckt.

Gezielter Krieg gegen Zivilisten

Der britische Luftkrieg hingegen richtete sich gezielt gegen Zivilisten. Die Folgen solcher "Terrorangriffe" zeigen sich erst mittelbar, wenn die Moral der Zivilbevölkerung zerbricht, wenn sie den Widerstand aufgibt oder sich gar gegen ihre eigene politische Führung wendet. Darauf hoffte die britische Regierung, darin bestärkt von einigen Personen aus der "Widerstandsbewegung" in Deutschland, ohne zu begreifen, daß sich die Haltung der Deutschen im Vergleich zum Ersten Weltkrieg wesentlich gewandelt hatte. Das Ergebnis war der nutzlose Tod von über 600 000 Opfern des Bombenkrieges gegen die Zivilbevölkerung, darunter 57 000 Kinder unter 14 Jahren, ohne daß die Moral der deutschen Bevölkerung gebrochen worden wäre. In den Prozessen des Internationalen Gerichtshofes in Nürnberg nach dem Ende des Krieges wurde solches völkerrechtswidriges Verhalten als Kriegsverbrechen gewertet - allerdings nur gegen den Verlierer.

"Baedeker-Angriff" angeordnet

Während die deutschen Bomberangriffe nach der Aufgabe der Invasionsplanungen gegen England 1941 abnahmen, forcierten die Briten ihre Luftangriffe gegen Deutschland. Nach der Bombardierung von Lübeck, durch die große Teile der mittelalterlichen Innenstadt zerstört wurden, mitsamt dem Dom, der Marienkirche, der Petrikirche, den Salzspeichern und vielen anderen historischen Gebäuden, hingegen keine einzige militärische Anlage, drückte Thomas Mann über den britischen Rundfunk aus dem Exil seine Befriedigung über die Zerstörung seiner Vaterstadt aus. Nachdem nach dem gleichen Schema auch Rostock in Schutt und Asche gelegt worden war, ordnete Hitler offizielle Vergeltung an. Die Rede ist von den sogenannten Baedeker-

Angriffen auf kulturell wichtige britische Städte wie Exeter, Bath, York und Canterbury.

Entwicklung der V-Waffen

Der Generalstab der Luftwaffe gab dem Generalluftzeugmeister die Anweisung, eine Waffe für Flächenangriffe entwickeln zu lassen. Sie wurde 1944 fertig und wurde bekannt unter der Bezeichnung V 1, später dann auch V 2, die vor allem zu Angriffen auf Städte eingesetzt wurde. Damit war der unterschiedslose Luftkrieg gegen die Zivilbevölkerung am

14. April 1942 eröffnet worden, den Deutschland jedoch nicht wirkungsvoll führen konnte, weil seiner Luftwaffe die für diese Art der Kriegführung notwendigen viermotorigen Bomber fehlten. Die Royal Air Force hingegen konnte ab 1942 die seit 1936 in Auftrag gegebenen und konstruierten viermotorigen Bomber wie "Stirling", "Halifax", und "Lancaster" einsetzen, zu denen bald die US-amerikanischen "fliegenden Festungen" hinzukamen.

Als die USA dann ihre Langstreckenjäger einsetzten, auf die man zunächst glaubte verzichten zu können, wurden auch am Tage Angriffe möglich, wobei sich die Amerikaner zunächst militärisch relevante Ziele aussuchten, während die Briten weiterhin bei Nacht mit Bombenteppichen Wohngebiete einscherten.

Pforzheim als "prima Feueranzünder"

Der beabsichtigte Einsatz von Giftgas und Anthrax gegen deutsche Städte, wie sie britische Stabschefs in Übereinstimmung mit Premierminister Winston Churchill forderten, unterblieb, weil die britische Seite fürchtete, daß Deutschland mit denselben Waffen zurückschlagen würde.

Den Höhepunkt der Zerstörungskraft konventioneller Bomben in Europa lieferten in den letzten Wochen des Krieges die Alliierten mit ihrem Angriff am 23. Februar 1945 auf die Stadt Pforzheim, die in den offiziellen Ziellisten der Alliierten nicht geführt wurde, weil sie für den Luftkrieg bedeutungslos war.

Man hatte lediglich festgestellt, daß der Stadtkern besonders brandanfällig war und daß man in ihm, wie der Oberbefehlshaber des britischen Bomberkommandos, Luftmarschall Arthur Harris, sich ausdrückte, "einen prima Feueranzünder" vorfand. 369 Maschinen der RAF griffen nachts Pforzheim an. Von den 65 000 Einwohnern wurden mindestens 20 200 getötet. 83 Prozent des inneren Stadtgebietes wurden zerstört. Es gelang wiederum, einen Feuersturm zu erzeugen. Am Tag danach griffen US-Jagdbomber tagsüber im Tiefflug die fliehenden, bergenden und löschenden Menschen in Pforzheim an und konnten weitere 100 töten. Sechs Wochen später besetzten französische Truppen die völlig zerstörte Stadt.

Moral der Deutschen blieb ungebrochen

Diese militärisch sinnlose Verwüstung deutscher Städte wenig Wochen vor Kriegsende - dazu gehörten auch Worms, Mainz, Hildesheim, Potsdam, Chemnitz, Würzburg, an der Spitze aber Dresden - sollte noch einmal zeigen, was die britischen Bomber vermochten, wie Harris sich ausdrückte. Die Abteilung für psychologische Kriegführung der Alliierten befürwortete ebenfalls diese Angriffe, weil sie für sie ein Experiment waren, mit dessen Hilfe sie feststellen wollte, ob Flächenbombardierungen nicht doch in der Lage wären, die Moral der Bevölkerung zu brechen.

Nach dem Krieg stellte der britische Militärhistoriker John Terraine jedoch fest: "Die Moral der deutschen Zivilbevölkerung und Armee blieb in einem nicht vorstellbaren Maße unerschütterlich."

Book review

An Exercise in Futility

- The Bombing of Auschwitz: Should the Allies Have Attempted It? edited by Michael J. Neufeld and Michael Berenbaum. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000. Hardcover. 350 pp. Bibliography, index, illustrations.

Samuel Crowell

Given the belief that Auschwitz was a unique slaughterhouse in which a million, or several millions, were gassed and burned, the question of whether the Allies could have done something to stop the supposed slaughter there is a natural one. In fact, aerial attacks on the alleged gas chambers of Auschwitz were proposed during the war, when several Jewish agencies tried to prod the United States and Britain to intervene militarily during the evacuation of 400,000 Hungarian Jews in 1944.

Following the war, interest in the question of the Allied failure to bomb Auschwitz receded, although it was still common enough for Arthur R. Butz to mention in his *Hoax of the Twentieth Century* (1977), along with his correct speculation that the Allies must have taken aerial photographs of the Auschwitz complex. In the following year, David Wyman wrote an article pressing the case for the Allies' dereliction in failing to bomb the "gas chambers and crematoria," an argument he would recapitulate in his 1984 book *The Abandonment of the Jews*. (We should note that "gas chambers and crematoria" are always discussed in tandem by Holocaust historians, evidence for the latter being considered sufficient proof of the former.) In 1979, when Brugioni and Poirier discovered the long-forgotten aerial photos of Auschwitz-Birkenau, they were seized upon, enabling Elie Wiesel to claim, "The world knew and kept silent ... nothing was done to stop or delay the process. Not one bomb was dropped on the railway tracks to the death camps" (p. x).

The present book, derived from a symposium held at the occasion of the opening of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum 1993, is basically a meditation on Wiesel's accusation of Allied inaction. The book comprises fifteen contributions which take up about two-thirds of its length, detailed notes, an extensive appendix of contemporary telegrams and cables, but only an edited version of the famous Vrba-Wetzler report.

A number of the articles are of an impressionistic nature. Gerhard Weinberg, the American professor who first proclaimed the bogus Hitler Diaries genuine, offers little except his opinion that the Nazis were "nasty people" who fundamentally enjoyed slaughtering Jews and who would have found a way to do so even if the gas chambers and crematoria had been bombed: to argue otherwise is "preposterous" (p. 25). Henry L. Feingold suggests in his piece that the proper route would have been to bomb the German cities in retaliation: after all, the cities were being destroyed anyway, so why not simply justify the practice by referencing Auschwitz? It is difficult to take such casual arguments seriously.

Richard Breitman, who is remarkable among orthodox historians of the Holocaust for his industry in consulting the archives on some occasions, contributes a marginally off-topic article about the ULTRA decodes. While his description of the results of the British effort that broke the German "Enigma" codes fails to address the book's central premise, he does mention that the British were unable to make a connection between the transports being sent to Auschwitz and mass killings. Breitman goes on to say: "More suggestive was a later (November, 1942) message that Auschwitz urgently needed six hundred gas masks to equip its new guards, but that, too, was only one little piece of a picture" (p. 29). Such a large number of gas masks would not have been necessary for any kind of gassing, fumigation or otherwise. On the other hand, the decode fits in nicely with other evidence developed over the past few years that indicates that Auschwitz and sites in occupied Poland were concerned about poison gas attacks at that time, and even before the crematoria were completed.

Several of the rest of the articles are of a highly technical nature. For example, the article by Frederick Kitchens, an Air Force expert, revels in the vocabulary of tactical bombing, describing the crematoria as "relatively soft targets of brick construction" (p. 86). Later Kitchens describes the prospective mission: a "dauntingly complex objective consisting of five widely spaced buildings (four at Birkenau, one over a mile away at Auschwitz I) which had to be identified and attacked in concert with little loiter time and no release error" (p. 90). Evidently, Kitchens was not informed that the base camp crematorium had been decommissioned the previous year, then turned into a bomb shelter. Other contributions go over similar details, and there are several diagrams showing the layout of the camp, the position of the Birkenau crematoria, and differently shaded circles and boxes to show the extent of damage to be expected around them.

Given the wealth of detail from an air force perspective, one would have expected a corresponding analysis of the passive ground defense at Auschwitz. Yet there is no discussion of the civil defense

fixtures, including gastight doors, with which the basements of the crematoria were equipped. Perhaps the authors did not want to contend with the paradox that, of all the structures in Auschwitz, the spaces they designate as "gas chambers" were in fact the best designed to withstand aerial bombardment. Meanwhile, while the authors are meticulous in estimating the collateral damage of a bombing raid in terms of prisoner casualties, none of them seems concerned that bombing the crematoria would also have involved the destruction of the sewage treatment plant as well as the Central Sauna. One is left with the absurd idea of a bombing raid that would destroy all of the hygienic facilities in an over-crowded camp, which would inevitably have engendered terrible epidemics.

The threat of diseases at the camp is, however, treated by Stuart G. Erdheim. It is his claim that had the crematoria been destroyed by bombardment, the Germans would have been unable to burn great numbers of corpses in ditches "due to the problems posed by humidity as well as the threat of disease. It was for these very reasons, in fact, that Himmler had ordered the crematoria built in the first place" (p. 355). Thus Erdheim's position might seem to be that the Nazis were committed to killing the prisoners in Auschwitz, but were hesitant to burn their bodies in ditches, for fear that this would lead to epidemics which would, no doubt, kill the prisoners at Auschwitz.

In general, the "technical" analyses all share two basic problems. First, there seems to be no clear appreciation of the actual capacities of the "gas chambers" or the crematoria, let alone the capacities as they were envisioned by the Allies in 1944. Most of the authors, quoting testimonies or postwar novels, dogmatically describe how the "gas chambers and crematoria" could destroy a thousand or ten thousand persons per day. But that calculation is irrelevant to the counterfactual scenarios they devise, because it is clear from the primary source material in the back of the book that the figure being tossed around in 1944 was sixty thousand per day.

That a killing rate of sixty thousand per day was even believed possible in 1944 is important to reconstructing the mindset of the Jewish groups and of American and British officials, from which one should be able to derive some conclusions about their concern, or lack of concern, for what was transpiring at Auschwitz. Yet so incredible a death rate should also have led the authors to attempt to establish the actual capacities of their assumed "gas chambers." If they had done so they would have found that the spaces they envisioned bombing had no extraordinary features. In effect, a basic analysis of the gassing claim, if it did not lead the authors to a revisionist perspective, would at least have led them to acknowledge that any closed space with a secure enough door would suffice, which means that bombing the "gas chambers" would have been utterly pointless.

The second basic problem concerns cremation. The underlying assumption appears to be that the Nazis were eager to carry out mass gas exterminations, but only if they could destroy all evidence of the crime. This idea suggests that the crematoria had some kind of magical ability to destroy the evidence of mass murder, and without such machines the mass murder would not have gone forward. This notion ignores the standard claim that several million Holocaust victims were killed with no expensive cremation facilities to dispose of their remains. Furthermore, since most of the authors endorse the idea of cremation pits at Auschwitz capable of destroying the remains of thousands on a daily basis, and must, according to the traditional view, endorse the idea for other locations, it is hard to see why the destruction of cremation facilities would be vital. We may leave aside the fact that bombing the crematoria would have, at the very least, provided the Nazis with a surfeit of bomb craters ready made for cremation. Still, it seems to us that the proper point of departure for any researcher attempting to evaluate the feasibility of a bombing run on the crematoria would have been to investigate the actual capacities of such a structure. If such is done, and realistic cremation rates selected, the point of bombing the crematoria is rendered moot.

Aside from the primary documentation provided in the back, there is on balance little to recommend The Bombing of Auschwitz. The technical articles, ranging over all the contingencies involved in the proposed bombing of the "gas chambers and crematoria," are fatally flawed by the ignorance of the authors about the very objects they envision destroying, which renders the rest of their highly learned commentary of little if any value. The impressionistic pieces, on the other hand, simply repeat well-known, but by now rather trite, moral judgments. There is, however, one pleasant surprise: Deborah Lipstadt, in an overview revised for this release, declares that the use of the Holocaust for political purposes, including the question of the Allied failure to bomb Auschwitz, is "ahistorical" -- which fairly well sums up the nature of this flawed book.

About the reviewer

Samuel Crowell is the pen name of an American writer who describes himself as a "moderate revisionist." At the University of California (Berkeley) he studied philosophy, foreign languages (including German, Polish, Russian, and Hungarian), and history, including Russian, German, and German-Jewish history. He continued his study of history at Columbia University. For six years he worked as a college teacher.

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Bombs on Britain

Dr. A.R. WESSERLE

16 March 1981

PBS Television
"The Blitz"

Sirs:

Rarely have I come across a television broadcast more vicious in intent and more warped in execution than your recent "Blitz on Britain." As a survivor of the mass air raid executed against my native city of Prague, Bohemia, on the Christian Holy Day of Palm Sunday, 1945, by the Anglo-American strategic bomber force -- a raid that maimed or murdered thousands a few seconds before the conclusion of the Second World War -- I say this:

1. There can be no comparison between the brutality of the Anglo-American bomber offensive, on one hand, and the minimality of the German-Italian efforts, on the other.

As the commander of the British strategic air offensive, Air Marshal Sir Arthur Harris shows in his *Bomber Offensive* (Macmillan, New York, 1947) 23 German cities had more than 60 percent of their built-up area destroyed; 46 had half of it destroyed. 31 communities had more than 500 acres obliterated: Berlin, 6427 acres; Hamburg, 6200 acres; Duesseldorf, 2003; Cologne (through air attack), 1994. By contrast, the three favorite targets of the Luftwaffe: London, Plymouth and Coventry, had 600 acres, 400, and just over 100 acres destroyed.

2. Anglo-American strategic bombers, according to official sources of the West German government in 1962, dropped 2,690,000 metric tons of bombs on Continental Europe; 1,350,000 tons were dropped on Germany within its 1937 boundaries; 180,000 tons on Austria and the Balkans; 590,000 tons on France; 370,000 tons on Italy; and 200,000 tons on miscellaneous targets such as Bohemia, Slovakia and Poland. By contrast, Germany dropped a total of 74,172 tons of bombs as well as V-1 and V-2 rockets and "buzz bombs" on Britain -- five percent of what the Anglo-Saxons rained down on Germany.

The Federal German Government has established the minimum count -- not an estimate -- of 635,000 German civilians were killed in France, Italy, Rumania, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and elsewhere.

3. Both Germany and Britain initiated air raids on naval and military targets as of 3 September 1939. However, when the British attacks on port installations in Northern Germany ended in disaster, with a devastating majority of bombers downed -- the Battle of the German Bight -- Britain switched over to less costly night air raids on civilian targets such as Berlin and the Ruhr industrial region. By contrast, Germany replied in kind only in the winter months of 1940/41, a year later.

Observers indubitably British, such as the late Labour Minister Crossman, the scientist and writer C.P. Snow, and the Earl of Birkenhead, have demonstrated that it was not Germany but Britain that, after May, 1940, unleashed an official policy of unrestricted and unlimited raids on civilian populations under its new Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, and his science advisor, Dr. Lindemann. Professor Lindemann, the later Viscount Cherwell, coolly calculated that, by using a force of 10,000 heavy bombers to attack and destroy the 58 largest German cities, one-third of the population of Germany would be "de-housed." The assumption, of course, also was that out of those 25-27 million homeless at least ten percent -- 2.5 to 3 million people -- would be killed. On this score alone, Winston Churchill and his advisors deserve to rank among the maddest mass murderers in history. In fact, as West German records show, 131 German towns were hit by heavy strategic raids. Only the courage of the Luftwaffe pilots, the effectiveness of the air defense network and the strength of the fire fighting organization worked together to prevent a bloodbath to the extent envisioned by the Prime Minister.

4. Blood baths did occur when conditions were right.

When the Anglo-American bombing policy reached its first grand climax in a raid on Hamburg that stretched over several days and nights in July, 1943, a minimum of 40,000 to 50,000 civilians burned to death.

With the defensive power of the Reich worn down in the second half of 1944 and in 1945, the Anglo-Saxons indulged in ever more massive extermination raids against Europe. Communities of little or no military value, even if attacked previously, were now pulverized, preferably under conditions of the utmost horror. Christian holy days, and dates and sites of famous art festivals were select occasions for raids. Many of the most beautiful cities of Europe and the world were

systematically pounded into nothingness, often during the last weeks of the war, among them: Wuerzburg, Hildesheim, Darmstadt, Kassel, Nuremberg, Braunschweig. Little Pforzheim in south-west Germany had 17,000 people killed. Dresden, one of the great art centers and in 1945 a refuge for perhaps a million civilians, was decimated with the loss of at least 100,000 souls. Europe from Monte Cassino to Luebeck and Rostock on the Baltic, from Caen and Lisieux in France to Pilsen, Prague, Bruenn, Budapest and Bucharest reeled under the barbaric blows of the bombers.

5. Nor did the extermination raids stop with Europe.

Cigar-chomping General Curtis LeMay demonstrated in the Far East that record kills could be achieved without resort to atomic weapons. By applying the lessons learned in Europe to the wooden architecture of the Asian mainland and Japan he raised "fire storms" which surpassed even those of Hamburg, Pforzheim and Dresden-Mass raids by superheavy B-29 bombers against Osaka, Nagoya, Kobe and particularly, Tokyo-Yokohama, resulted in a minimum harvest of 125,000 to 150,000 kills per raid. More than 1.2 million Japanese civilians were killed through bombing. Millions of others fell victim to it, from Mukden, Manchuria, to Rangoon, Burma.

It goes without saying that LeMay and his colleagues could not have carried out their campaigns of mass annihilation without the backing of the highest political leaders in the land. In fact, the United States Government had placed orders for the immediate development of four-engined, superheavy, very-long-range bombers (the XB 15, the B-17, the XB 19, the B-24 and the B-29) starting in 1934.

Thus, the Roosevelt Administration had begun to lay plans for offensive, strategic, global war back in 1933, the year of its inception. With the later exception of Britain, none of the other "large" powers followed suit: neither France, Italy and Germany, nor Soviet Russia and Japan the latter with extensive holdings in the Pacific.

These are sobering facts. PBS, with its record of fine programming, has much to lose if it insists on presenting biased reports such as "Blitz on Britain" or "UXB." If you care to tap the unplumbed depths of sentimentality, envy and hatred, start a comic strip. In the meantime, we'll change channels.

Give poor Alistair Cooke, who has been mightily discomfited of late, a much-needed respite.

Sincerely,
Dr. A. R. Wesserle

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Luftkrieg: Der erste Luftangriff auf Berlin am 7./8. Juni 1940 und seine Vorgeschichte

Zwischen September und November 1939 wurden an die Air France drei viermotorige Langstrecken-Postflugzeuge geliefert, die Farman 223.4 oder, wie sie nach der Verstaatlichung der Firmen Henri Farmans durch die französische Volksfrontregierung nunmehr genannt wurden, die SNCAN NC 2234. Sie wurden auf die Namen „Camille Flammarion“, „Le Verrier“ und „Jules Verne“ getauft.

Da die Air France durch den Kriegsausbruch keine Verwendung für die Flugzeuge mehr hatte, gab sie sie an die Admiralität zur Eingliederung bei den Marinefliegern ab. Dort sollten die Flugzeuge als strategische Aufklärer verwendet werden. Die „Jules Verne“ erhielt eine besonders hochwertige Besatzung, um sie für risikoreiche strategische Operationen einsetzen zu können. Kommandant des Flugzeuges wurde Korvettenkapitän Dallièrre, der Navigator war Paul Comet, ein Mann mit Erfahrung in Transatlantikflügen und früherer Chefnavigator der Air France.

Von 28. April bis 6. Mai 1940 wurde die „Jules Verne“ im Werk etwas umgebaut. Sie erhielt einen Platz für einen Bombenschützen im Bug, einen Navigatorplatz und einen MG-Stand auf dem Rumpfrücken und wurde schwarz gemalt.. Am 13. Mai 1940 startete sie in Lanvéhoc-Poulmic, der Marinefliegerbasis des Kriegshafens Brest, zu einem Angriff auf den Güterbahnhof Aachen. Danach wurden, schon bei Dämmerlicht, die Maas-Brücken von Maastricht angegriffen. Das Flugzeug kehrte unbeschädigt wieder zurück. Dieser erfolgreiche Angriff veranlasste die Admiralität, alle drei Farman 223.4 in der Bomberstaffel B 5 zusammenzufassen. Dallièrre wurde Staffelkapitän. Die beiden anderen Flugzeuge waren zu diesem Zeitpunkt aber noch zur Militarisierung im Werk.

In der Nacht vom 19. zum 20. Mai 1940 bombardierte „Jules Verne“ erneut den Aachener Güterbahnhof, Angriffshöhe 300m. Diesmal erhielt das Flugzeug Flaktreffer und da der Rumpf ein einziger Kraftstoffbehälter und das Flugzeug dadurch sehr verwundbar war, sollten nun keine Einsätze als Bomber mehr geflogen werden. (Nach manchen französischen Quellen lag zwischen dem 13. und dem 19. Mai noch ein Angriff auf Middelburg und Vlissingen). Das Flugzeug wurde von Lanvéhoc-Poulmic nach Bordeaux-Mérignac zurückverlegt.

Am 6. Juni 1940 beschloss dann die französische Regierung in einer Art Verzweiflungsakt, Berlin mit der Bomberstaffel B 5 anzugreifen. Da die beiden anderen Flugzeuge immer noch in der Umrüstung waren, musste die Mission durch die „Jules Verne“ allein ausgeführt werden.

Am Nachmittag des 7. Juni 1940 startete die „Jules Verne“ mit 2.000 kg Bomben in Bordeaux-Mérignac. Korvettenkapitän Dallièrre hatte einen Kurs gewählt, der in solange wie möglich aus dem Bereich deutscher Flak heraushalten sollte, da ein Flaktreffer im Rumpf die sofortige Explosion des Flugzeuges zur Folge gehabt hätte. Er flog also über Brest, den Ärmelkanal, die Nordsee, Dänemark, die Ostsee und drang bei Stettin von Norden in den deutschen Luftraum ein. Es war eine klare Nacht und um Mitternacht erreichte die „Jules Verne“ Berlin, ohne bisher Berührung mit Flak oder Nachtjägern gehabt zu haben. Dallièrre erkannte den Flughafen Tempelhof und wies den Piloten an, eine Landung zu simulieren, um den

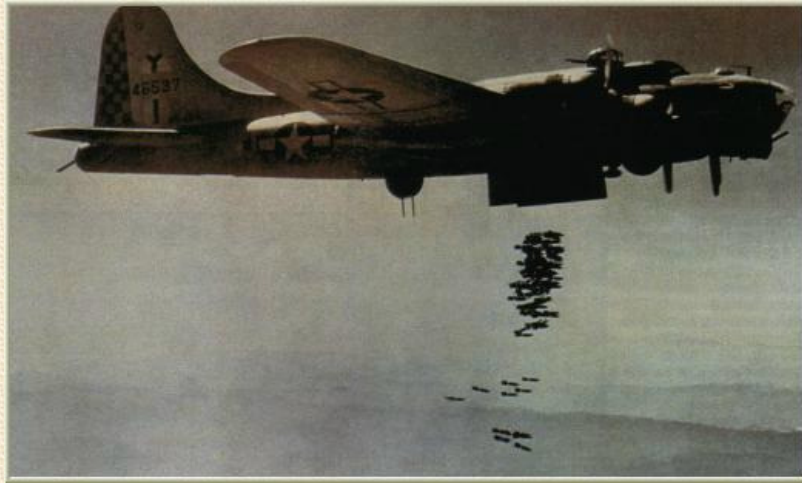
Eindruck zu erwecken, ein deutsches Flugzeug setze zur Landung an. Die „Jules Verne“ kreiste mehrmals, dann überflog das Flugzeug Tempelhof in 100 m Höhe mit seiner Höchstgeschwindigkeit von 350 km/ und flog Richtung Norden. Hier sollten Fabriken im Norden Berlins angegriffen werden. In zwei Anflügen warf die „Jules Verne“ ihre acht Sprengbomben und 80 10-kg-Brandbomben ab. Schon vorher hatte starkes Flakfeuer eingesetzt. Die „Jules Verne“ flog nach dem Angriff nach Süden Richtung Leipzig ab und landete nach 13 ½ Stunden Flug am 8. Juni morgens gegen 5 Uhr in Chartres, ohne noch einmal mit der deutschen Luftabwehr in Berührung gekommen zu sein. Über Paris-Orly kehrte sie dann nach Lanvéhoc-Poulmic zurück.

Am folgenden Tag gab die französische Admiralität bekannt: "Eine Formation Fernbomber unserer Marina bombardierte in der Nacht vom 7. zum 8. Juni ein Industrieviertel im Norden von Berlin als Vergeltung des deutschen Bombenangriffs auf Paris. Alle Maschinen sind zurückgekehrt." Der deutsche Wehrmachtbericht meldete: „Die nächtlichen feindlichen Luftangriffe auf das deutsche Reichsgebiet richteten im allgemeinen nur unwesentlichen Schaden an.“ Berlin wurde nicht erwähnt.

Bombenterror gegen Deutschland (?)

Waren die Bombenangriffe auf Zivilisten gerechtfertigt ?

Von Torsten Migge



B-17-Bomber über Deutschland

Waren die Luftangriffe der Engländer auf Deutschland während des Zweiten Weltkrieges und die systematische Zerstörung deutscher Städte berechtigt, oder waren sie trotz aller Verbrechen, die von Deutschen begangen wurden, eher barbarische Gewaltakte, die ihres gleichen suchen?

Betrachtet man diese komplizierte Thematik nüchtern und objektiv, kommt man nicht umhin festzustellen, dass der alliierte Bombenterror auf deutsche Städte, und damit auf wehrlose Kinder, Frauen und Alte, moralisch verwerflich und vielleicht sogar ein Kriegsverbrechen war (ähnlich oder vergleichbar mit dem Zerstörungsterror russischer Truppen in Tschetschenien unserer Tage)!

Die Rechtfertigung, dass diese Bombardements entscheidend dazu beitrugen, den Krieg schneller zu beenden um weiteres Leid zu verhindern, entspricht nämlich nicht den Tatsachen, denn Kriegsentscheidend war dieser Terror in keinsten Weise, noch hat er den Kriegsverlauf nennenswert beeinflusst. Er erzeugte lediglich grenzenlosen Hass, der den unsäglichen Krieg noch verschärfte.

Das wussten die Briten aber auch aus eigener Erfahrung, denn die deutsche Luftwaffe versuchte ja ihrerseits die Engländer 'kapitulationsbereit' zu bomben - ein aberwitziges Unterfangen!



Aber Churchill (Foto) sah damals keine andere Möglichkeit, den ständigen Forderungen Stalins nach einer zweiten Front im Westen zur Entlastung des russischen Kriegsschauplatzes nachzukommen, als größtmögliche Zerstörung und vermeintliche Demoralisierung auf deutsches Territorium zu tragen. Die bis zur alliierten Invasion in der Normandie am 6. Juni 1944 zunächst einzige verbliebene Offensivwaffe der Engländer, die sie gegen Deutschland einsetzen konnten, waren eben ihre Bomber.

Man darf aber auch nicht aus den Augen verlieren - aber das soll keine Rechtfertigung sein! - dass deutsche Bomben als Erste den Terror gegen die Zivilbevölkerung des Feindes entfacht haben - wenn auch völkerrechtlich umstritten: Guernica im spanischen Bürgerkrieg, Warschau, Rotterdam, Coventry etc.

Bombenangriffe auf Städte gab es allerdings auch schon im *Ersten Weltkrieg*, indem das deutsche Kaiserreich zunächst Zeppeline einsetzte, um England zu bombardieren (31. Mai 1915 erster Zeppelinangriff auf London; ab 1917 Einsatz von wendigeren Flugzeugen), wobei während des Ersten Weltkrieges 300 Tonnen Bomben auf Großbritannien abgeworfen wurden und 660 Tonnen Bomben vom Royal Flying Corps auf deutsche Ziele.

Die weltweit erste bombardierte Stadt

Die erste Stadt, die planmäßig und wiederholt aus der Luft bombardiert wurde, war Tsingtau in China, ein ehemaliges Fischerdorf im Gebiet von Kiautschou, das 1897 vom Deutschen Reich besetzt und dann auf 99 Jahre gepachtet wurde, um über einen Stützpunkt in Ostasien zu verfügen. Innerhalb weniger Jahre war Tsingtau zu einer modernen Großstadt mit Werft, Hafen und Bierbrauerei ausgebaut worden. Bei Beginn des Ersten Weltkrieges erhob Japan Anspruch auf die deutschen Besitzungen in China. Bereits am 2. September 1914 begann der Großangriff der Japaner (mit 40.000 Soldaten), vom Wasser, vom Land und aus der Luft. Sturm und Regen bremsten den japanischen Vormarsch, ihre Verluste waren hoch. Ein deutsches Torpedoboot schaffte es sogar, den Kreuzer "Takachiho" zu versenken. Doch als die deutschen Schiffe keine Munition mehr hatten, wurden sie von ihren Kommandanten in der Hafeneinfahrt versenkt. Als auch den Landtruppen die Munition ausging, waren am 7. November 1914 die Kämpfe beendet, wobei die Japaner insgesamt 12.000 Soldaten verloren; Deutschland verlor 200 Mann.

Aber Luftbombardements waren keine Erfindung der Deutschen oder Japaner. Das britische Empire hatte bereits in Kolonialkriegen wie im Sudan (1916) oder in Afghanistan (1919) Volksaufstände niedergebommt. Im Sommer 1920 gab es einen Aufstand der Araber im (von den Engländern aus den ehemaligen drei osmanischen Provinzen Basra, Bagdad und Mosul installierten) Irak als Folge der Verhaftung und Einkerkelung eines populären Scheichs, wobei Churchill als Rüstungs- und Kolonialminister 97 Tonnen Bomben auf die Aufständischen werfen ließ; mehr als 6.000 Menschen kamen um. Übrigens empfahl Churchill bei Beginn des Konflikts in völliger Skrupellosigkeit den Einsatz chemischer Waffen gegen Rebellen: "*Ich bin absolut dafür, Giftgas gegen unzivilisierte Stämme einzusetzen, um Angst und Terror zu verbreiten.*"

Dennoch beflügelten die Fortschritte der Luftfahrtstechnik zunächst vor allem in Deutschland die Phantasien der Militärs. Schon 1938 forderte Hermann Göring den Bau eines Flugzeugs zur Bombardierung New Yorks. Und Hitler wollte gar *"mit Terrorangriffen auf amerikanische Millionenstädte den Juden eine Lektion erteilen"*. Daimler-Benz entwickelte einen "Amerikabomber"...

Im Zweiten Weltkrieg bombardierten die Briten zunächst lediglich Kriegsschiffe, wie erstmals am 4. September 1939, als die RAF mit 10 Blenheim und 9 Wellington in der Helgoländer Bucht den Panzerkreuzer "Admiral Scheer" sowie den Kreuzer "Emden" angriffen. Einer der ersten geplanten britischen Bombenangriffe gegen ein Ziel auf deutschem Boden während des Zweiten Weltkrieges erfolgte am 19. März 1940. Da man der deutschen Luftwaffe noch keinen Vorwand für die Bombardierung von Zivileinrichtungen in England liefern wollte, richtete sich der Angriff gegen den Seefliegerstützpunkt Hörnum auf der dünn besiedelten Insel Sylt. Fünfzig Whitley- und Hampden-Bomber führten den Nachtangriff durch, und lediglich eine Maschine kehrte nicht zurück. Einundvierzig Besatzungen behaupteten später, das Ziel gefunden und bekämpft zu haben, wobei zahlreiche direkte Treffer auf Hangars und Unterkünften erzielt worden seien. Eine spätere Luftaufklärung vermochte jedoch keine schwerwiegenden Schäden an dem Seefliegerhorst feststellen.

Der große Wandel in der Bomber-Politik kam für die Royal Air Force im Mai 1940, im Anschluss an den verheerenden deutschen Bombenangriff auf Rotterdam. Der neue britische Premierminister, Winston Churchill, hob am 15. Mai die Sperre gegen zivile Ziele in Deutschland auf. Noch in der gleichen Nacht griff ein Verband von 99 Bombern Öl- und Eisenbahnziele im Ruhrgebiet an. Die strategische Bomberoffensive gegen Deutschland hatte damit ernsthaft begonnen.

Während des ersten Teils dieser Offensive wurden verschiedentlich Punktziele aus niedriger Höhe bei Nacht angegriffen, so vor allem der Dortmund-Ems-Kanal am 12. August. Das eigentliche Objekt bestand aus der Überführung des Kanals über die Ems nördlich der Stadt Münster.

Obwohl der erste britische Luftangriff gegen eine deutsche Stadt bereits in der Nacht auf den 12. Mai 1940 Mönchengladbach traf, dabei einige Dutzend Bomben auf die Stadt nieder gingen und vier Zivilisten starben, und obwohl Bombenangriffe auf deutsche Städte schon längst ausgiebig geplant wurden, bevor überhaupt auch nur ein deutscher Flugzeug über England agierte, wollte Churchill nicht unbedingt der erste in diesem Krieg sein, der massiv Wohnhäuser bombardiert. Viel mehr wartete er eher geduldig darauf, dass der deutschen Luftwaffe bei ihren Bombardierungen britischer Flugplätze und Rüstungsbetriebe ein entscheidender Fehler unterliefe und Zivilisten zu Schaden kamen. Und er brauchte nicht lange darauf zu warten...

Zunächst bombardierten die Deutschen ausschließlich englische Flugplätze, Radarstationen, Militäranlagen und Rüstungsbetriebe - mit für die Briten beängstigendem Erfolg. Ein Flugplatz nach dem anderen samt des größten Teils der Flugzeuge, ein Rüstungsbetrieb nach dem anderen, dazu Tanklager, Vorratslager, Munitionslager, Militärstützpunkte, wurden zerstört. Die Engländer sahen sich in größter Not! Allerdings waren die Verluste auf *beiden* Seiten hoch: Die deutsche Luftwaffe verlor beispielsweise bis zum 1. August 1940 in der Luftschlacht um England 286 Flugzeuge - darunter 105 Jäger. Die Engländer dagegen verloren 148 Spitfire und Hurricanes. Zudem lief die deutsche Neuproduktion nur gemächlich, da der deutsche Nachrichtendienst die englische Jägerproduktion stets unterschätzte. Auf deutscher Seite rollten beispielsweise im Juni 1940 nur 164 Maschinen des Typs Me 109 bei Messerschmitt vom Band, während in England im selben Zeitraum 446 Hurricanes und Spitfires gebaut wurden. Im Juli, als die Kämpfe heftiger wurden, bekam die RAF weitere 496 Jagdflugzeuge, während die Luftwaffe sich mit 220 weiteren begnügen musste.

"Adlertag" aber sollte nun die Entscheidung in der Luftschlacht um England bringen - eine neue Taktik: deutsche Flieger griffen massiert England an. Jeder Tag der Schlacht wog anders; an einem verloren mal die deutschen mehr Flugzeuge, am anderen die Briten. Es gelang den Deutschen an manchen Tagen sogar, mehr britische Maschinen abzuschießen, als am gleichem Tag neu gebaut wurden. Kesselschlachten der Luftflotte 2 führten nun verstärkt Angriffe gegen alle wichtigen Sektorenstationen des britischen Jägerkommandos rings um London durch, wobei bis zu 1.700 Einsätze pro Tag flogen wurden.

Ein Manko kam für die deutsche Luftwaffe erschwerend hinzu: Die deutsche Me 109 hatte nur 300 Kilometer Aktionsradius. Beim Eintreffen im Raum London verblieb eine Treibstoffreserve von lediglich 20 Minuten Luftkampf, bevor sie nach Frankreich zurück fliegen mussten. *Trotz alledem* erwies sich die deutsche Taktik als effizient und erfolgsversprechend.

Hätte nun die deutsche Luftwaffe an dieser Strategie festgehalten, wäre die Royal Airforce zusammen gebrochen, wäre die Rüstungsproduktion zum Erliegen gekommen - und eine Invasion für die Deutschen erfolgreich erscheinen lassen, denn bei der Luftschlacht um England ging es um die Operation "Seelöwe", der Invasion deutscher Truppen in England, die erst möglich sein würde, wenn man die absolute Luftherrschaft hatte.

Aber nun passierte *das*, was Churchill dringlichst herbei sehnte: Ein Wohnviertel und Zivilisten kamen zu Schaden! Denn bei einem Luftangriff auf England in der Nacht zum 25. August 1940 war eine He 111 über das ihr zugewiesene Ziel - ein Öltanklager etwa 30 Kilometer östlich von London - hinausgeschossen und hatte versehentlich die englische Hauptstadt bombardiert. Die Verluste und der Sachschaden waren gering, aber Churchill hatte nun Vergeltungsangriffe auf Berlin befohlen, die zwar wiederum ihrerseits kaum Schaden anrichteten, aber er bezweckte mit diesen unbedeutenden Bombenangriffen etwas ganz anderes: Churchill wollte nämlich Hitler in völlige Rage bringen, um ihn listig von den englischen Flugplätzen und Rüstungsfabriken wegzulocken - auf London! Er wollte Hitler provozieren, seine Bomber auf London, statt auf die Rüstungsindustrie und Militäreinrichtungen, fliegen zu lassen.

Und als würde Churchill Hitlers Willen diktieren, drohte Hitler nach diesen englischen Bomben auf Berlin voller Wut in einer Rede am 4. September 1940 damit, zur Vergeltung englische Städte ausradieren zu lassen: *"Wir werden diesen Nachtluftpiraten das Handwerk legen, so wahr uns Gott helfe"*.

Göring zog nun auf Wunsch Hitlers seine Flieger von den englischen Flugstützpunkten ab (ganz im Sinne Churchills!), um im großem Stil London zu bombardieren, denn Hitler war sowieso der Meinung, dass die Bombenangriffe auf englische Flugplätze und Industrieanlagen nichts bringen - er hatte in völliger Verkenntnis der Lage überhaupt keine Ahnung, wie *nahe* die Royal Airforce und die britische Rüstungsproduktion dem Zusammenbruch waren!

Göring und Hitler verfolgten damit das Kalkül: England besitze nur noch wenige Jagdflugzeuge, die sich aber dem Kampf entziehen. Bombardieren wir London, sind die Engländer gezwungen, sich dem Kampf zu stellen um ihre Hauptstadt zu schützen. Dabei könne die Luftwaffe die paar britischen Maschinen vom Himmel fegen.

Entscheidender Fehler der Luftwaffe während der "Battle of Britain"

Der britische Colonel Frederick W. Winterbotham, der täglich die von ihm mitgelesenen und vom britischen Geheimdienst entschlüsselten deutschen Luftsprüche dem Premierminister aushändigte, schrieb nach dem Krieg zur Taktikänderung der deutschen Luftwaffe: *"Das war Görings schwerster Fehler! Hätte er seine Angriffe auf unsere Flugplätze in Südengland noch 14 Tage durchgehalten, dann hätte er unsere restlichen Jagdflugzeuge wahrscheinlich ausgeschaltet. Am 5. September...befahl er jedoch...die Londoner Docks anzugreifen. Wollte er nur für einen Angriff britischer Bomber auf Berlin Rache nehmen, der die Versprechung des Reichsmarschalls, kein deutsches Flugzeug werde jemals die deutsche Hauptstadt erreichen, Lügen strafen? ...Strategisch gesehen, beging er jedenfalls einen gewaltigen Fehler! Die deutschen Angriffe auf die Londoner Docks hatten die letzten Jagdflugzeuge der RAF vor der Vernichtung bewahrt"*.

Churchill war aber ein eiskalt und rational kalkulierender Politiker, dem sehr bewusst war, dass, wenn die Deutschen London bombardierten, es sehr viele Opfer unter den Zivilisten geben wird, aber er sah - und dass nicht unberechtigt, sondern sehr realistisch! - darin die einzige Chance, die britische Luftwaffe und die Rüstungsindustrie vor der völligen Vernichtung zu retten! Er opferte quasi Zivilisten in London, um die Verteidigungsbereitschaft Englands aufrecht zu erhalten oder wiederherstellen zu können - ich möchte ihm nicht unterstellen, dass ihm diese Entscheidung leicht fiel, aber er sah darin den einzigen Weg, England zu retten (später nach dem Sieg sagte er auch würdigend, nie in der Geschichte hatten bisher so viele so wenigen für so vieles zu danken)...

Durch die - sehr wohl voraus gesehene! - Reaktion der Deutschen Führung erst, war es den Briten möglich, ihre Flugzeuge zu retten, den Neubau zu forcieren und sich neu zu rüsten!

Denn Göring unterschätzte erstens am Ende nicht nur die Zahl der noch vorhandenen englischen Maschinen erheblich, da die Royal Airforce sehr haushälterisch mit ihren Jägern umging: Große Einsätze blieben aus, nie waren alle Jäger gleichzeitig in der Luft, Kämpfen wurde ausgewichen etc, und die enorme Neuproduktion ab September 1940 (da nicht mehr bombardiert!) konnte entscheidendes Potential bereitstellen. So wurde der Eindruck erweckt, die britische Luftwaffe sei am Ende.

Zweitens wurden die Briten dann am Ende im entscheidenden Teil der Luftschlacht um England mit der Weiterentwicklung eines Geräts namens Radar, über das die Deutschen in dieser Präzision/Stärke noch nicht verfügten, vom Boden aus direkt zu den deutschen Maschinen geleitet, während die deutschen Flugstaffeln ihre Ziele erst suchen mussten bzw. ihre Bomben überspitzt betrachtet nach Gutdünken abwarfen. Denn den nun folgenden Wellen deutscher Bomber auf London stellte sich die Royal Airforce mit über 300 vom Boden aus radargesteuerten Jägern entgegen!

Die Verluste der Deutschen an Bombern und Jägern waren verheerend: Volle 25 Prozent der Maschinen der Luftwaffen gingen verloren. Dagegen war das englische Fighter Command zu diesem Zeitpunkt ganz offensichtlich stärker als je zu vor.

Das bewirkte, dass die Briten am Ende eine deutsche Maschine nach der anderen vom Himmel holten, so dass Schlussendlich die Deutschen ob ihrer Verluste das Weite suchten und den Kampf aufgaben, da er, erstens, nicht mehr zu gewinnen war, und, zweitens, Hitler sich bereits auf "Barbarossa" vorbereitete, dafür seine Luftwaffe brauchte und vor allem glaubte, wenn er Russland erst einmal besiegt hat, wird England schon kampfflos klein bei geben. Die Akte "Seelöwe" kam ins Schubfach - um nie wieder hervor geholt zu werden.



Luftwaffenoffiziere bei Hitler 1944

Die Engländer sahen sich aber nun in Anbetracht der erfolgten Bombardierungen Londons durch die deutsche Luftwaffe legitimiert, ihrerseits massiv und mit allen Mitteln deutsche Städte anzugreifen. So behaupteten die Briten auch jahrelang erfolgreich, die Bombardierungen deutscher Städte waren die Folgen deutscher Bomben auf Coventry, Liverpool, Rotterdam oder eben London.

Allerdings: Zunächst einmal provozierte Churchill solche Städtebombardements, außerdem warfen die Briten vor ihren ersten im Zweiten Weltkrieg durchgeführten Bombardements auf Deutschland Flugblätter ab, mit der Aufschrift: *"Wir Bomben eine Stadt nach der anderen, um euch die Fortführung des Krieges unmöglich zu machen"*. Darin enthalten ist schon der Wille und Vorsatz zu Bombardieren, und es zeigt, wie nun erstmals veröffentlichte Dokumente bestätigen und beweisen, dass die Briten solche Bombardements schon ausgiebig planten zu einer Zeit, als noch gar keine deutschen Flugzeuge über englisches Territorium agierten (allerdings sollte nicht unerwähnt bleiben, dass solche Bombenangriffe bzw. Bombardierungen von Städten von *allen* Armeen geplant wurden, ob Italiener, Sowjets oder Deutsche - und das schon weit vor dem Zweiten Weltkrieg...).

Auch erwies es sich für die Briten schon aus technischen Gründen als unmöglich, die bei Kriegsbeginn geplante Zerstörung militärischer Ziele im großen Stil kriegsentscheidend durchzuführen, denn wie wenig treffsicher die britischen Bomber waren, dokumentiert ein Geheimbericht aus dem Jahre 1941: Selbst bei Idealwetter konnte nur jeder dritte Bomber seine Bomben wenigstens in einem Umkreis von acht Kilometern um den Zielpunkt abwerfen. So lag es für die Royal Airforce nahe, Flächenziele auszuweisen - statt einzelne Fabriken ganze Großstädte. Und nach Hitlers Überfall auf die Sowjetunion, am 22. Juni 1941, galt die Vernichtung deutscher Zivilisten nicht mehr als Kollateralschaden, sondern als Zweck der Operation. In seiner "Area Bombing Directive" vom 14. Februar 1942 legte das Luftfahrtministerium fest, *"dass die Zielpunkte die Siedlungsgebiete sein sollen und beispielsweise nicht Werften oder Luftfahrtindustrien"*. Somit kann man davon ausgehen, dass diese Bombardements der Engländer auf deutsche Städte auf *jedenfall* erfolgt wären, selbst wenn niemals auch nur ein deutsches Flugzeug über England geflogen wären! Jedenfalls lässt die Fakten- und Dokumentenlage diesen Schluss zu. Denn anders konnte zunächst ein britischer Beitrag zur Bekämpfung des Aggressors Hitler-Deutschland (auch im Sinne Stalins) gar nicht ausfallen! Die britischen Bomber waren die einzige Waffe, mit der man den Feind ernsthaften Schaden zufügen konnte - entsprechend hoch waren übrigens auch die Verluste des Bomberpersonals der Royal Airforce (ca. 56.000 Bombersoldaten).

Churchills Irrglaube

Churchill glaubte allen ernstes, Deutschland kapitulationsbereit bomben zu können. Entsprechend gab Generalmajor Bottomley am 9 Juli 1941 Churchills Befehl an dem Oberbefehlshaber der britischen Bomberwaffe weiter: *"Ich bin beauftragt, Ihnen mitzuteilen, dass eine eingehende Untersuchung der gegenwärtigen politischen, wirtschaftlichen und militärischen Lage des Feindes gezeigt hat, dass der Kampfgeist der Zivilbevölkerung und das Verkehrsnetz die anfälligsten Punkte in seiner Rüstung sind"*.

Das hatte Professor Frederick Lindemann, der spätere Lord Cherwell, Churchill eingeredet. Lindemann hatte durch gewisse Intrigen erreicht, dass Churchill nur noch ihn als wissenschaftlichen Berater der Regierung anhörte, während er Gegner des Flächenbombardements aus dem Zimmer wies und so hochbedeutende und um Englands Rettung und Luftverteidigung 1940 verdiente Männer wie Henry Tizard als wissenschaftliche Berater entließ, weil sie gegen Lindemanns Zivilistenbombardierungs-Wahn einzuschreiten versucht hatten. Der Chronist C. P. Snow überlieferte Berichte, wie der *"schwache, aber gerade noch wahrnehmbare Geruch einer Hexenjagd"* eine Atmosphäre in Whitehall und in der britischen Presse schuf, die *"hysterischer war, als es sonst im offiziellen Leben Englands üblich ist"*.

Und Lindemann hatte Churchill weiszumachen vermocht, dass binnen achtzehn Monaten - vom März 42 bis Mitte 43 - ein Drittel sämtlicher Deutscher obdachlos und damit kapitulationsbereit zu bomben seien, vorausgesetzt, ihre Innenstädte, nicht aber die deutsche Industrie seien das Angriffsziel!

Unfassbar, dass ein von Natur humaner Mensch wie Churchill noch jahrelang nachdem er selber gesehen hatte, dass grosse Landheere, nicht aber Bombardierungen von Wohnzentren kriegsentscheidend waren, mit wachsender Wut und Wucht weiterbomben liess, eigene Piloten in Scharen dabei opferte und den Nazis fast nichts anderes damit zufügte als die Möglichkeit, Brotkarten solcher Bevölkerungsgruppen einzusparen, die nicht mitkämpften.

Unfassbar auch oder vor allem deshalb, weil Churchill ja selber sah und miterlebte, wie die deutschen Bombenangriffe auf Wohnviertel der Briten das Gegenteil dessen erreichten, was sie zu erreichen beabsichtigten: nämlich die Fanatisierung der Bevölkerung, anstatt ihre Demoralisierung!

Auch dachten die Briten, wenn sie deutsche Städte zerstören, wächst der Unmut gegen Hitler und die Deutschen werden gegen ihren Führer aufstehen. Dieses Ziel haben die Briten aber niemals auch nur annähernd erreicht. Es gab auch die Einsicht, dass die Bevölkerung in einer totalitären Diktatur überhaupt keine Möglichkeiten hat, politische Veränderungen zu erwirken. Ab 1943 war klar, dass solche Ziele illusorisch waren.

Und *trotzdem* intensivierten die Engländer ab 1943 ihre Bombardements, die ihren Höhepunkt im Februar 1945 in der sinnlosen und militärisch völlig unbedeutenden Zerstörung von Dresden erreichten. Wie viele Menschen an diesem 13./14. Februar 1945 ihr Leben verloren, lässt sich nicht mehr genau klären, denn die Stadt war mit Flüchtlingen aus dem Osten belegt, die vor der anrückenden Roten Armee flüchteten. Seriösen Schätzungen und alter Dokumente zur Folge waren es ca. 35.000 Tote.

Dresden - ein Verbrechen?

Der britische Labour-Politiker Richard Crossman, der im zweiten Weltkrieg Leiter der englischen psychologischen Kriegführung gegen Deutschland war, schrieb acht Jahre nach dem Krieg: *"Die Zerstörung von Dresden war eines jener Verbrechen gegen die Menschlichkeit, deren Urheber in Nürnberg unter Anklage gestellt worden wären, wenn jener Gerichtshof nicht in ein bloßes Instrument alliierter Rache pervertiert worden wäre."* (Quelle: DER SPIEGEL Nr. 4/20.1.03, Seite 88)



Zerstörtes Dresden



Brennender Hafen in Hamburg

Es stellt sich allerdings die berechtigte Frage nach dem Sinn von Luftangriffen auf deutsche *Wohnsiedlungen*, statt wesentlich effektivere Luftangriffe auf *Rüstungsbetriebe* (!)?! Denn Bombardierungen von Rüstungsbetrieben/-anlagen haben die Amerikaner anfangs mit ihren Präzisionsangriffen bei Tag (zwar mit hohen eigenen Verlusten, aber:) durchschlagend erfolgreich erledigt - wobei ab etwa 1944 auch sie sich von den Engländern zu Flächenbombardements der Wohnviertel anstiften ließen.

Wie weitaus erfolgreicher gerade die von den Amerikanern durchgeführten Präzisionsangriffe gegen *Industrieanlagen* waren, zeigen folgende Beispiele: Im Juli und August 1944 bombardierten die Amerikaner deutsche Ölanlagen. Mit geringstem Einsatz an Flugzeugen (17% ihrer Bomberflotte) erreichten sie eine Halbierung der deutschen Ölproduktion. Die Versorgung der Luftwaffe fiel von 180.000 auf 10.000 Tonnen!

Im Frühjahr 1945 legten die Amerikaner die Benzinversorgung des Reiches lahm. Genau das führte unter anderem zum raschen Kriegsende, denn jede deutsche Offensive war aus Spritmangel unmöglich oder scheiterte letztendlich daran (z.B. Ardennen-Offensive Dezember 1944 bis Januar 1945, die zunächst äußerst erfolgreich nicht zuletzt wegen Spritmangel abgebrochen werden musste)!

Die Briten aber verfolgten andere Ziele. Sie wollten besonders die Wohnsiedlungen - und hier besonders die Arbeiter (!) - treffen. Denn es lässt sich nicht abstreiten, dass sich die Bombardements der Wohnviertel, und damit der Arbeiter, negativ auf die Produktion (insbesondere der *Rüstungsproduktion*) und auf die Moral der Soldaten an der Front auswirkten. General Alfred Jodl vertrat nach dem Krieg sogar die Ansicht, dass die Bombardements den Krieg entscheidend beeinflusst hätten. Diesbezüglich ließ er 1945 seine Aussage zu Papier bringen, dass die *"vollkommene Luftüberlegenheit"* der Alliierten *"den Kriegt entschieden hat."* Am *"effektivsten"* wären die *"strategischen Bombardierungen des Heimatgebietes"* gewesen, der *"entscheidende Faktor"* wäre *"die Zerstörung des Heimatlandes, fast ohne Widerstand"* gewesen. Explizit zum Thema des *"psychologischen Effekts"* der Bombardierung deutscher Städte auf die Soldaten an der Front (und damit auf die Kampfkraft/Moral) gab Jodl an:

"Zunächst einmal waren die psychologischen Auswirkungen auf die Frontsoldaten sehr groß. Das wird häufig übersehen, aber meiner Meinung nach war es von überragender Bedeutung. Während der Soldat vorher glaubte, dass er durch den Kampf an der Front seine Heimat, seine Frau und seine Kinder beschützte, wurde dieser Faktor völlig eliminiert und durch die Erkenntnis ersetzt, 'Ich kann so viel durchhalten wie ich will, aber meine Frau und meine Kinder gehen trotzdem vor die Hunde.'" (1)

Und: *"Dies unterminiert auch die Kampfkraft der Soldaten im Allgemeinen, so dass diese zunehmend 'unruhig' wurden, diese nicht mehr 'so enthusiastisch' kämpften, die deutschen Soldaten sich daher zunehmend fragten: 'Wofür kämpfe ich? Ich kann noch so tapfer sein und trotzdem wird zu Hause alles in Stücke geschlagen.' Dies war mit Sicherheit eine starke Reaktion auf den Kampfgeist der Truppen. Parallel dazu hatte es Einfluss auf die Arbeitskraft der Arbeiter in der Rüstungsindustrie ..." (2)*

Quellen:

(1) Overy, Richard: Verhöre. Die NS-Elite in den Händen der Alliierten 1945. Seite 278. Econ Ullstein List Verlag 2002.

(2) Overy, Richard: Interrogations: The Nazi Elite in Allied Hands 1945. S. 283ff. Penguin Books, 2002.

Reichsrüstungsminister Albert Speer meinte nach dem Krieg sogar, dass Aufgrund der Bombardements 35 Prozent weniger Panzer, 31 Prozent weniger Flugzeuge und 42 Prozent weniger Transportflugzeuge produziert worden seien. Wenn diese Einschätzung richtig ist, dann bewirkten die Flächenbombardements erhebliche Produktionseinbußen, die sich wiederum auf die Fronten auswirkten. Dennoch muss man danach fragen, ob die Zerstörung der Städte der einzige Weg war, um das Militär zu schwächen? Es hätte mit Sicherheit effizientere und weniger zerstörerische Alternativen zu den Flächenbombardements gegeben, denn hätte man seine Energie und sein Potential darauf verwendet, die deutsche Industrie- und Rüstungsproduktion zu attackieren, anstatt ganze Städte in Schutt und Asche zu legen, hätte das auf jeden Fall den Krieg entscheidend beeinflusst und seine Dauer möglicherweise erheblich verkürzt!



Bomben auf Lübeck am 29. März 1942



Durch Bomben zerstörtes Frankfurt am Main

Um ihre Flächenbombardements der Wohnsiedlungen so effektiv als möglich durchführen zu können, entwickelten die Briten mehrere Methoden. Auch amerikanische Wissenschaftler waren an der Perfektionierung beteiligt. So baute der aus Deutschland emigrierte Stararchitekt Erich Mendelsohn auf einem geheimen Versuchsgelände in der Wüste von Utah ([Dugway Proving Ground](#)) in den USA Berliner Mietskasernen samt Mobiliar und Gardinen nach, um deren Entflammbarkeit zu testen und dann herauszufinden, mit welcher Art Bombardierung die größtmögliche Zerstörung zu erreicht ist. "Bomber-Harris" (Foto), der Oberstrategie der britischen Bomberwaffe, arbeitete geradezu fanatisch an den Techniken, um die größtmögliche Effektivität zu erzielen. Ohne ihm wären die Bombardements mit Sicherheit weniger Zerstörerisch gewesen.



Ziel war es, so viele Zivilisten wie möglich zu töten. Dazu führten sie verschiedene Testangriffe durch um herauszufinden, mit welcher Art Bomben der größtmögliche Schaden angerichtet werden kann. Schon Anfang der Vierziger Jahre wurde aber den britischen Luftkriegsexperten klar, dass allein mit Sprengbomben der Gegner kaum zu beeindrucken sei. Arthur Harris (Foto) kam zu dem Schluss, dass die eigentliche Zerstörung und Vernichtung durch Brand erreicht werden müsse. Dazu warf man im Frühjahr 1942 quasi als Test 1.350 Sprengbomben, aber 460.000 Brandbomben auf Köln ab. Und man stellte fest, dass hier die Strategie aufging: Die Sprengbomben (Luftminen - darunter riesige "Blockbuster") zerstörten die Dächer, dicken Brandwände und Fenster; die Brandbomben (Brandstäbe und Phosphorbomben), die nun ungehindert ins Haus auf brennbares Material fallen konnten, entzündeten die Häuser, in denen nun Zugluft wie durch einen Kamin zog. Auch wurden durch Spreng- und Splitterbomben, teils mit Zeitzünder, Wasserleitungen zerstört, Strassen verkratert und Löschrupps ausgeschaltet. Die Masse der entstehenden Brände machten es der Feuerwehr und den Brandbekämpfern unmöglich, wirkungsvoll zu löschen, die Brände breiteten sich ungehindert über weite Flächen aus. Über den in

Brand gesteckten Stadtteilen bildete sich eine gigantische Heißluftsäule, die Tausende Tonnen Sauerstoff ansaugte und orkanartige Stürme entstehen ließ. Der Feuersturm in Hamburg und Dresden ist nicht zufällig entstanden, sondern war durch ausgeklügelten Bombenabwurf geplant!

Die Menschen, egal, wo sie sich befanden, kreppten an Hitzeschlag oder Überdruck, Verbrennungen oder Kohlenmonoxidvergiftung.

Nach dem Angriff deutscher Truppen auf die Sowjetunion am 22. Juni 1941 ließ Churchill fast nur noch Flächenbombardements auf deutsche Städte durchführen. Als Stalin seinem britischen Verbündeten im Sommer 1942 bei einem Treffen in Moskau erregt vorwarf, England lasse die Sowjetunion im Stich, beruhigte Churchill ihn mit der Zusage, die RAF (Royal Airforce) werde *"nahezu jede Wohnung in fast jeder deutschen Stadt"* zerstören.

Und nachdem die deutschen Raketen V-1 und V-2 in und um London mehr als 2.000 Tote gefordert hatten, erwog Churchill sogar den Einsatz von B- und C-Waffen gegen Deutschland, etwa Milzbrandbomben, die *"schwere Verluste, Panik und Verwirrung hervorrufen"*; für Großstädte wurde gar eine Todesrate von 50 Prozent errechnet. Jedoch wurde das hauptsächlich aus Befürchtung vor entsprechenden Vergeltungsschlägen wieder verworfen.

Bis zum Ende des Krieges am 8. Mai 1945 blieben die Bomber jedenfalls der wichtigste Beitrag des Empire im Kampf gegen die Achsenmächte.

600.000 Zivilisten, darunter 80.000 Kinder, fielen den Bombardements der Alliierten zum Opfer. Brand- und Sprengbomben fielen auf nahezu jede Stadt mit über 50.000 Einwohnern, dazu auf 850 kleinere Orte. Die Hölle wurde da entfacht, schreckliche Vernichtung herbei geführt: Leichen, die in den über 1.000 Grad heißen Feuersbrünsten auf die Größe von Kommisbroten schrumpften; Säuglinge, die im siedenden Löschwasser der Feuerwehr bei lebendigen Leibe gesotten wurden; Kinder, die ihre zu Asche verbrannten Eltern im Eimer zum Friedhof trugen. In Hamburg beispielsweise wurden 44 Prozent aller Wohnungen der Stadt in Schutt und Asche gelegt. Die Zerstörung kannte keine Grenzen...

Übrigens:

Churchill hatte gelegentlich Bedenken wegen der Bombardements geäußert, einmal sagte er "Gehen wir zu weit? Sind wir Bestien?". Trotzdem hielt er an der Strategie fest! Er entzog sich auch fortwährend einer Vorführung von Filmaufnahmen der Zerstörungen - ähnlich wie Hitler, der es wehemend vermied, eines seiner Konzentrations- und Vernichtungslager zu besuchen.

Erst nach der Zerstörung Dresdens distanzierte sich Churchill von dem Bombenterror gegen Zivilisten - den er aber einst ausschlaggebend mit initiiert hatte!

Auch wurde die britische Öffentlichkeit darüber im Dunkeln gelassen, wie der Bombenkrieg gegen Deutschland tatsächlich geführt wird, in englischen Zeitungen hieß es immer nur, dass man rein militärische und industrielle Ziele bombardiere. Kein Wort davon, dass systematisch ganze Städte zerstört werden.

Und:

Die Amerikaner lernten eifrig von den Briten, denn im größtem Feuersturm aller Zeiten, von den Amerikanern entfacht, starben 80.000 Menschen: Tokio 1945!

Dennoch: Kriegstaktisch waren die Bombardements von Wohnsiedlungen nach damaligem Kriegsverständnis /-recht legitim - moralisch aber ein streitbarer Punkt. Im juristischen Sinn waren sie *keine* Verbrechen, denn im damals geltenden Völkerrecht kamen solche Bombardements gar nicht vor, d.h. es gab zum Zeitpunkt des Zweiten Weltkrieges keine Abkommen oder Vereinbarungen, die dieses klar regelte (weder in der Haager Landkriegsordnung, noch im sogen. Völkergewohnheitsrecht). Somit befanden sich die Bombardements von Städten bzw. Wohnsiedlungen quasi in einer Gesetzeslücke: es gab keine Artikel, die solche Bombardements erlaubten, aber auch keine, die dies explizit verbot. Abkommen, die diese Mängel verbindlich regulieren, gibt es erst seit dem 12.8.1949 mit dem gültigen Zusatzprotokoll zu den Genfer Konventionen.

Die Bombardements der Städte waren darüber hinaus nichts anderes als Ausdruck eines totalen Krieges. Und ein totaler Krieg beinhaltete schon seit dem amerikanischen Bürgerkrieg nicht nur die Vernichtung der feindlichen Armeen, sondern auch oder insbesondere die Vernichtung der Ressourcen, der Städte, der Häfen, der Nachschubwege, etc. und auch der hinter dem Militär stehenden Bevölkerung des Feindes.

Die Briten, bzw. das britische Militär (oder explizit das Bomber Command) tat nichts anderes, als schon 1864 ein William T. Sherman, der während des amerikanischen Bürgerkrieges mit seinen Armeen durch die Länder des Südens (der Konföderierten Staaten) zog und eine 100 Kilometer breite Schneise der Verwüstung hinterließ: Felder wurden niedergebrannt, sämtliche Vorräte und der komplette Viehbestand geraubt, Städte in Schutt und Asche gelegt, etc. Damit sollte das Rückgrad des Feindes gebrochen werden, denn es reichte nicht mehr wie in Kriegen vorangegangener Epochen aus, lediglich die Heere des Gegners zu schlagen.

In dieser "Tradition" wurde der Erste Weltkrieg geführt, sowohl als auch der Zweite Weltkrieg, und zwar von **allen** Parteien!!! Als die Wehrmacht in Polen oder der Sowjetunion einfiel, war sie nicht weniger zerstörerisch. Tausende Dörfer und Städte wurden den Erdboden gleich gemacht, wobei die Bevölkerung in dieser Politik völlig irrelevant war. Die Deutschen raubten die gesamten Ressourcen inklusive der Lebensmittel, so dass der *"einheimischen Bevölkerung nicht mal das nackte Dasein gelassen"* wurde (wie im Zitat auch Goebbels in seinen Tagebüchern niederschrieb). Laut geheimen Angaben des Statistischen Amtes raubten die Deutschen allein in den Jahren 1941/42 und 1942/43 den Grundbedarf für über 30 Millionen Menschen aus den besetzten Ländern, explizit aus der Ukraine.

Schon vor Kriegsbeginn (explizit des Russlandüberfalls) wurden von den deutschen Strategen auf höchster Ebene die Konsequenzen des beabsichtigten Lebensmittellaubs erörtert: *"Hierbei werden zweifellos zig Millionen Menschen verhungern, wenn von uns das für uns Notwendige aus dem Lande herausgeholt wird"*.

(Quelle: Aly, Götz: Hitlers Volksstaat. Raub, Rassenkrieg und nationaler Sozialismus. Fischer Verlag)

Anhang:

Dokument über Bombenopfer in Dresden (und angeblicher Bordwaffeneinsatz).

(Das Original-Dokument liegt mir hier als Fotokopie vor. Originalabschrift der relevanten Stellen bezüglich Bombenopfer und Bordbeschuss durch den Autor. Mit [...] gekennzeichnete Stellen bezeichnen Kürzungen durch den Autor)

Der Höhere SS- und Polizeiführer Elbe in den Gauen Halle-Merseburg, Sachsen und Wehrkreis IV - Befehlshaber der Ordnungspolizei -

BdO IV: L XI - 231 Nr. - 7/45 geheim.

Betr.: Schlußmeldung über die vier Luftangriffe auf den LS-Ort Dresden am 13., 14. und 15. Februar 1945

[...]

II. Angriffsziele, Angriffstaktik und Wetterverhältnisse.

1. Ziel und Taktik:

[...]

Mittagsangriffe vom 14.2. und 15.2.45 auf das gesamte Stadtgebiet. Beim Mittagsangriff vom 14.2.45 besondere Schäden in Löbtau, Friedrichstadt, Cotta und der Leipziger Vorstadt. Beim Mittagsangriff vom 15.2.45 vor allem die Stadtteile Plauen, die Südvorstadt, die Stadtteile Tolkewitz, Laubegast, das Waldschlößchenviertel sowie die Stadtteile Loschwitz und Oberloschwitz getroffen. Beide Mittagsangriffe überwiegend Hochangriffe. Bei allen Angriffen war Bordwaffenbeschuß festzustellen."

[...]

V. Schäden an Polizei- u. Wehrmachtsgebäude:

[...]

E. Personenschäden: Bis 10. März 1945 - früh festgestellt: 18.375 Gefallene, 2.212 Schwerverwundete, 13.718 Leichtverwundete. 350.000 Obdachlose und langfristig Umquartierte. Aufgliederung der Personenschäden nach Geschlechtern mit Rücksicht auf bestehende Schwierigkeiten (Abwanderung großer Teile der Bevölkerung, Überführung eines großen Teils der Verwundeten nach außerhalb, vollkommene Verkohlungen bzw. starke Verwesung der Leichen) noch nicht bzw. überhaupt unmöglich. Überwiegend handelt es sich aber um Frauen und Kinder. Nach Angaben der Kripo im Laufe der Zeit möglich, etwa 50% der Gefallenen zu identifizieren. Nach bisherigen Feststellungen ist der überwiegende Teil der Gefallenen in den LS-Räumen und außerhalb durch mittelbare oder unmittelbare Brandeinwirkung sowie durch Verschüttung umgekommen.

Auch durch Abwurf von Minen- und Sprengbomben insbesondere während des 2. Nachtangriffes auf Straßen und Plätze sowie Grünanlagen sind hohe Personenverluste eingetreten. Die Gesamtzahl der Gefallenen einschl. Ausländer

wird auf Grund der bisherigen Erfahrungen und Feststellungen bei der Bergung nunmehr auf etwa 25.000 geschätzt. Unter den Trümmernmassen, insbes. der Innenstadt dürften noch mehrere Tausend Gefallene liegen, die vorläufig überhaupt nicht geborgen werden können. Genaue Feststellung der Gefallenenzahl erst möglich, wenn durch Vermissennachweis und Meldeämter der Polizei feststeht, welche Personen Dresden verlassen haben. Beim Vermissennachweis und der Stadtverwaltung liegen z. Zt. etwa 35.000 Vermissemeldungen vor. Unter den Gefallenen bisher etwa 100 Wehrmachtsangehörige festgestellt.[...]

[...]

H. Besondere Vorkommnisse:

1. Bergung der Gefallenen, auch soweit nicht verschüttet, mußte durch Kräfte des örtlichen LS-Leiters erfolgen, ebenso die Überführung nach den Friedhöfen. Mit Rücksicht auf die schnell fortschreitende Verwesung und bestehende außerordentliche Schwierigkeiten bei der Bergung, sowie Mangel an geeigneten Fahrzeugen zur Überführung auf Friedhöfe mit Zustimmung des Gauleiters und der Stadtverwaltung auf dem Altmarkt insgesamt 6865 Gefallene eingäschert. Die Asche der Gefallenen wurde auf einen Friedhof überführt.

2. Plünderer: Von der Schutzpolizei, insbes. durch eingesetzte Streifen bisher 79 Plünderer festgenommen. Eine größere Anzahl bereits hingerichtet. Vorstehender Bericht wird nach Abstimmung der Unterlagen mit der Kreisleitung d. NSDAP erstattet.

I.A.

gez. Thierig.

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